



The Confessing Church's Response to the Holocaust from a Theological Christian-Ethical Perspective

JW Lewis

 **orcid.org/0000-0003-1111-3109**

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Promoter: Dr Vitali Petrenko

Co-Promoter: Prof JM Vorster

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Student number: 25867210

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Note to the Text:

I have used the Harvard Exeter Style for citations in the body of the thesis as well in other citation. The sources cited are listed as a bibliography, rather than as a list of references. Although the vast majority of sources have been cited either in the body of the thesis or in the, some twelve or thirteen per cent of the sources listed have not been cited. They are listed, however, because they were either read in some form or therefore contributed substantially to the understanding of the subject matter. The bibliography, as formatted, conforms to North-West University's prescribed method.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
CHAPTER ONE	
OVERVIEW.....	1
1.1 Title	1
1.2 Abstract.....	1
1.3 Key words.....	1
1.4 Introduction.....	1
1.5 Problem statement	3
1.6 Aims and objectives.....	7
1.7 Central theological argument.....	7
1.8 Methodology.....	8
CHAPTER TWO	
ETHICS OVERVIEW.....	9
2.1 Overview of ethics.....	9
2.2 Major ethical categories.....	12
2.3 Ethical systems.....	13
2.4 Virtue-based ethics.....	19
2.5 Christian ethics.....	21
2.6 Ethics summary.....	23
CHAPTER THREE	
A CHURCH DIVIDED.....	13
3.1 A German Church divided.....	27
3.2 Overview	27
3.3 Nazi influence.....	31
3.4 German church's reaction.....	36
3.5 Protestant churches.....	34
3.6 The Confessing Church split... ..	46
3.7 Summary.	46

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NUREMBERG LAWS	48
4.1	Laws restricting the Jews..... 48
4.2	The Enabling Act..... 48
4.3	The Aryan Paragraph 49
4.4	The Nuremberg Laws 53
4.5	Kristallnacht..... 56
4.6	Summary of Anti-Jewish Legislation 57

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BARMEN DECLARATION.....	58
5.1	The Theological Declaration of Barmen..... 58
5.2	The Confessing Church at Barmen..... 60
5.3	The Declaration of Barmen..... 64
5.4	Implications of the Barmen Declaration. 66
5.5	Implications for the Confessing Church..... 70

CHAPTER SIX

THE STUTTGART CONFESSION OF GUILT.....	72
6.1	The Stuttgart Confession..... 72
6.2	Confessions of Guilt 72
6.3	The Declaration of Guilt..... 76
6.4	The Confession's Influence..... 79
6.5	Pressure to respond 82
6.6	The Response 83

CHAPTER SEVEN

A THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CONFESSING CHURCH'S RESPONSE.....	85
7.1	Theological influences of the Confessing Church 85
7.2	The Two Kingdoms..... 85
7.3	Imago Dei..... 97
7.4	Dialectical Theology 98
7.5	The Knowability of God..... 99

7.6	The Conscience	101
7.7	Anti-Semitism and racism in Germany.....	105
7.8	Public Theology.....	108
7.9	Drawing conclusions.....	113
CHAPTER EIGHT		
IMPLICATIONS FROM THE CONFESSING CHURCH'S RESPONSE.....		114
8.1	Implications from the Confessing Church's response.....	114
8.2	Never underestimate the importance of one	114
8.3	The Church needs to focus on its Mission	117
8.4	Integrate belief and action	118
8.5	Respect the Jews' position in Salvation	119
8.6	Place a high value on human.....	120
8.7	Reassert Christian values and morals in Politics.....	124
8.8	Open discussions on the public square.....	128
8.9	A Synopsis of the Confessing Church.....	129
Appendix.....		131
REFERENCE LIST:		138

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

1.1 Title

The Confessing Church's Response to the Holocaust from a Theological Christian-Ethical Perspective

1.2 Abstract

When is a Christian justified in assertive resistance against injustices by the state? The events of the Holocaust have been investigated for many years. German Protestants were divided over the initial response to the National Socialist Party or the Nazis led by Adolf Hitler. Ultimately the Confessing Church became the main conduit of resistance for the Protestants in Germany. The Confessing Church was led by key Protestant leaders at the time such as Martin Niemöller, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The response of the Confessing Church has been scrutinized regarding a Theological Christian-Ethical perspective. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *Ethics* as his view of how the church and government should relate to the scriptures. This is an examination of a Christian ethical response to the injustices of the Third Reich.

1.3 Key words

The Confessing Church, Protestant, The Holocaust, Christian ethics, providence, Anti-Semitic, Aryan, Two Kingdoms, and Mandate.

1.4 Introduction

The Holocaust resulted in the killing of approximately six million Jews and another five million of factional groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses, homosexuals, mentally challenged people, physically challenged people, and others not found to contribute to the agenda of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. Hitler was successful in swaying the Germans to vote him in as a promising leader eventually. Germany had suffered devastating after-effects of the Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty enacted by an assembly of countries after the First World War depleted the social, economic, military, and political resources of Germany. Germany had risen to be a world power after its unification in the nineteenth century. Its quick ascent to power resulted in a flood of opposition from many countries, particularly the British Empire. The British Empire along

with their allies attempted to hinder Germany in ensuring there would be no future attempts at continental domination.

Nazi Germany was not an overnight European power. The power that came to be was the culmination of much work, scheming, manipulation, and time. The time from 1871 when Germany became united until 1945 when World War II ended brimmed over with major events that ultimately shaped history.

Following the First World War Germany found that its position which resulted from the Treaty of Versailles was unacceptable. The previously mentioned restrictions were harsher than Germany could accept. The Weimar Republic came under great scrutiny which resulted in many Germans calling for revision of the treaty (Roberts, 1993:759). Few, if any, expected the retaliation that was to come.

As a result of the treaty, Germany became vulnerable to European powers such as Britain due to the sanctions that were placed on it. "There was a brief but deep enthusiasm for imperialism and always great sensitivity over the preservation of British naval supremacy. More and more this appeared to be threatened by Germany, a power whose obvious economic dynamism caused alarm by the danger it presented to British supremacy in world commerce" (Roberts, 698). Under Wilhelm II, Germany had been known to use its power in commerce. Ironically, the competition between Britain and Germany did not stop the commerce between the two.

Wilhelm II sought to establish Germany's naval supremacy as well as make it a commercial powerhouse. It was not unusual for Germany to engage itself in the affairs of other countries, often through irrational means. This was the situation of Germany at the turn of the century.

Having a single definition of *the holocaust* is possible, but the events surrounding the use of the term as it is understood currently alter the original meaning and intent. Fischel and Ortmann define it in this way, "*Holocaust* is taken from the Greek 'burnt offering'; this term is used to identify the Nazi's policy to annihilate the Jewish people during World War II. It is estimated that six million Jews were murdered" (Fischel & Ortmann, 2004:311). So while "burnt offering" is the original meaning of the word, it was expanded to encompass the annihilation and eradication of people not viewed as profitable for society.

An individual's value is not determined by one person, no matter how powerful. Only God has the right to place value of persons, according to Colossians 1:15-20:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (ESV).

Only the person of Christ, who is the creator and sustainer of all things, can make that determination. This is one of the areas of contention for the Lutheran church. According to Luther's view of the "Two Kingdoms," the government had a God-ordained responsibility to establish a moral society, and if need be, they could take up the sword to do that. Based on Luther's understanding of Romans 13:1-7, the government was justified in using force to establish moral order.

The position taken by The National Socialist Party (Nazi) has been deliberated since its inception and rise of power. The Holocaust would produce unease for a post-World War II, and beyond, society. So the Holocaust, while being associated with a single undertaking by Hitler, is in reality a series of events channelled to accomplish a single purpose. This purpose of eradication was disconcerting for many and continues to plague the consciences of the world.

1.5 Problem statement

The question may be asked, when is a Christian justified in assertive resistance against injustices such as the Holocaust? There are many factors to be considered in this question. How much influence did Martin Luther have on the response of the German Christians with his understanding of the "Two Kingdoms?" Would Bonhoeffer's idea of the "Four Mandates" have been an adequate response?" The church, made up of Christians both Catholic and Protestant, accounted for over three-quarters of the population six years after Hitler took office, according to a census report (Ericksen, 1999). By numbers, the church was in a position to exert some amount of influence on the government. Why didn't they? Many believe that the reason was for fear that they would be persecuted (Barnett Interview, 2014). This could have been the case, but it appears as if Hitler was more interested in his agenda than the church.

The tension between the church and the Nazis was fundamentally an attempt at political conformity. The Nazi Party anticipated that if the church was placed under pressure they would conform to the ideals of the party. In an interview with Victoria Barnett she comments, "The

state measures and pressures on both the Catholic and the Protestant churches were aimed at ensuring their political conformity and, for the most part, it must be said that leaders of both churches conformed” (Barnett Interview, 2014). So it seems that the strategy of the party worked.

It appears that the concern of the church during these years of oppression was driven by the fear of persecution and restrictions placed on the church by the state (Barnett Interview, 2014). Both the Catholic and the Protestant churches complied with the increasing restrictions placed on them by the state (Barnett). For the most part the churches were unhindered as long as they conformed to these restrictions. There were instances as will be documented in the following chapters where the *Gestapo* or *agents of the Third Reich* would act covertly to monitor pastors by combing the content of sermons and messages. Those found not to be in conformity would be arrested and tried.

Another alternative view is that the concept of a Secular Kingdom mandated by God was totally separate from the Spiritual Kingdom mandated by God. As a result, the Spiritual Kingdom or the church was not to interfere with the Secular Kingdom or the government. Luther saw the secular as a way of controlling the wickedness of the world that was in opposition to God. The church was not to interfere in the affairs of the government according to this view.

These were isolated cases, though. The churches continued to operate and function under conventional practice and worship. The few instances of state interference came predominantly from overt defiance of the Nazi Party. “There was actually very little direct interference. The instances in which the state police arrested clergy, etc. were in individual cases where the clergy or church member was engaging in activities against the state-e.g. protests, public sermons condemning state actions etc.” (Barnett, Interview). One knew that such explicit defiance would result in retaliation by the Third Reich.

There also have been some misguided attempts at clustering Luther and Hitler together under the auspices of the “Two Kingdoms” umbrella and making Luther somehow influential in the mass murder of many Jews. This is an overstatement at best. Luther unquestionably had some antipathy toward the Jews when he wrote “About the Jews and Their Lies” (Luther, 1543). In addition, it must be noted that Luther’s idea of the “Two Kingdoms” can be taken out of context and forfeit any benefit to the Holocaust. It may provide some implications but cannot be seen in the same context as the sixteenth century. This research will attempt to relate the doctrine of

“The Two Kingdoms” and Bonhoeffer’s idea of “The Mandates” to the events that took place during the Holocaust.

The place of Christian ethics and the idea of the “Two Kingdoms” and “The Mandates” have become important parts of the study of the Confessing Church’s response to the Holocaust. How one views the relationship between the spiritual realm and the natural realm is vital to understanding the response of the Christians to the Nazi authority.

This view has found some support according to Romans 13:1-7:

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behaviour, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour (NASB).

One consideration that needs to be deliberated on is: How does this passage relate to the circumstances of government when it functions as an oppressive entity against race, culture, and ethnicity? This is where Bonhoeffer’s view of the Four Mandates is useful.

In Bonhoeffer’s unfinished collection of writings known as “Ethics”, he states, “The question is how one is to conceive this distinction between church and world without relapsing into these spiritual spheres (Two Kingdoms)” (Bonhoeffer, 1955). Bonhoeffer unearths the view of four kingdoms: labour, marriage, government, and church (Bonhoeffer, 1955). He asserts that these mandates find precedence in the Bible by using passages in Genesis regarding the account of creation and Paul’s later writings to the church. In Bonhoeffer’s view God and the world are one in Christ. (Bonhoeffer, 1955) It was through these four mandates that he would develop his theory which stands in contradistinction to the traditional Lutheran views promulgated by its namesake Martin Luther.

Bonhoeffer’s expressed dissatisfaction at the Confessing Church’s response to the injustices contemptuously discarded by Hitler and his inner circle. If Bonhoeffer’s alleged involvement in

the attempt to assassinate Hitler is true, it most likely was his thoughts that are substantiated in statements like this one:

We are not Christ, but if we want to be Christians, we must have some share in Christ's large-heartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes, and by showing a real sympathy that springs, not from fear, but from liberating and redeeming love of Christ for all who suffer. Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behaviour. Christians are called to sympathy and action...by the sufferings of their brothers and sisters, for whose sake Christ suffered (Bonhoeffer, 1997: 14).

This statement in his *Letters and Papers from Prison* reflects his thoughts on active resistance in place of the conformity of a bystander. He believed it was his responsibility to act on behalf of those oppressed in the likeness of Christ himself.

These three scenarios have some validity to show how the Christians responded to the Holocaust. The question can be asked, what should the response have been and why? Could any response have altered the outcome of millions of slayings at the hands of Hitler and the Nazis? This examination will look intently at Bonhoeffer and the Four Mandates as guiding principles for the church's alternative response to the Holocaust, but also to future responses of the church to gross injustices committed by the state.

The Nazi regime worked in defiance of biblical commands; this leads the church today to harbour some fundamental questions. From this viewpoint, appropriate research questions would be: How the Confessing Church should have responded to the Holocaust with Christian ethics in consideration?

The view of theological Christian ethics during this time may be related to the response of the Confessing Church. A comparison of the theological Christian-ethical response to contemporary society may be beneficial in addressing further injustices. A look at the work of contemporary scholars like John Frame may help in bridging the chasm of culture from the Holocaust to the contemporary church.

Sub-questions arising for this main research question are:

- What was the Aryan Paragraph?
- How did the German Christians respond to the Aryan Paragraph?
- Who were the key figures in The Confessing Church Resistance?

- Was the response of The Confessing Church based on theological-ethical considerations?
- Where does the contemporary church need to look for ethical guidance with state injustices?

1.6 Aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to evaluate the Church's response to the Holocaust from a theological Christian-ethical perspective, and to indicate how theology and Christian ethics can add value to the ethical guidelines for future injustices and persecution. This thesis will inform the main relevant Christian ethical considerations to be employed and may be useful for a possible bridging of the chasm between secular and spiritual authority.

In researching the potential effect which the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms had on the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust and the Christian ethics involved, the following objectives should be met:

- Study and evaluate whether The Confessing Church responded to the Nazis and the Third Reich in a theologically Christian-ethical way.
- Uncover Scriptural evidence on the "Two Kingdoms" and Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* through the Four Mandates
- Study and evaluate what responses were honoured and instigated by the response of the German Protestant Church's.
- Study and evaluate what remorse was the result of the response of the Confessing Church.
- Study and evaluate Dietrich Bonhoeffer's response based on his view of the Four Mandates.
- Study and evaluate possible implications this will have on future responses of the evangelical church to injustices of the state based in theological Christian ethics.

1.7 Central theological argument

The crucial theological contention in this thesis is that theological Christian ethics can add value to the evangelical Church's obligation to confront political and religious prejudices.

1.8 Methodology

The research will be *qualitative* in nature. It will focus on literature, not statistical information. The research will be a comparative literary study and will be guided according to a methodical process as suggested by GST Guiding Documents (Greenwich School of Theology & North-West University Potchefstroom Campus) as well as *The Craft of Research*, 2nd, ed. (Booth, Colome & Williams, 2003). This work will be done in the framework of the *hermeneutic epistemology*. The study will further be conducted in accordance with certain biblical premises from which ethical values will be concluded based on a discipline of recognized hermeneutics (Blomberg, Klein, & Hubbard, 1993; Hendricks, 1991; Stein, 1994; & Traina, 1980).

The research will be conducted with philosophical and ethical research principles (Booth, Colome, & Williams 2003; Turabian, 1993). The research will be personal and gathered from a distance. Resources such as The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. will be utilized as well as the vast resources available through literary studies and historical documentation.

The qualitative research will be intentional and specifically descriptive. It will be focused on formulating specific not general applications for the Protestant church. These applications are to draw conclusions with which may be applied in the Twenty-first Century church.

The study will be performed within a Reformed tradition. The concentration on ethics will be a direct influence of theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Bonhoeffer, 1945). Hermeneutics has taken on different nuances over the years since the Reformation. It is essential that a statement should be made on the presuppositions that exist in this research. The Apostle Paul tells Timothy, his young protégé, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) In order for one to have a correct process of handling God’s Word, one needs to have a methodical approach to the scriptures. The author comes from more of an existential approach, where the text becomes the conduit for God to have a direct encounter with His people. In addition to this approach, the process used is from a grammatical, historical, and literal process of exegesis.

In this approach to scripture one uses several guiding principles to arrive at a proper interpretation. In the tradition of the Reformation, the hermeneutical presuppositions are based from an emphasis on God’s Covenants with His people, drawing from the literary devices offered by each author. In addition to the literary devices, the historicity of culture and context

will be considered. Man identified labels can be misleading and openness to further exegesis can result in a greater understanding of the text. It is for these reasons that Reformation historical approach has been used to measure the theological and ethical implications from the Holocaust so that future oppression can be thwarted.

CHAPTER 2 ETHICS

2.1 Overview of Ethics

How was it possible? (Hayes, 2015.) That is the question that Peter Hayes and many other Holocaust scholars are trying to answer. How was it possible for approximately 11 million people to be murdered and this to have been state-sponsored? There are two institutions that society looks to for guidance, safety, and security: The Church and the State! Religion and government in some form have shaped the world as it is known in the twenty-first century. One will see as this story unfolds that the German people had put their faith in the State and the Church. It is ironic that both appeared to have failed the people. How was it possible? That is part of the investigation of this paper. The following will lay a foundation for the right and wrong behaviours that perpetrated the Holocaust.

Ethnic cleansing has been a problem in many societies, and it continues to plague various parts of the world. Probably the most recognized attempt at ethnic cleansing took place during the Holocaust. The Nazis' goal was to purge Europe of all races considered to be inferior to the "superior" Aryan race. According to Hitler, only those of pure German blood were Aryan. Therefore, even those who were German citizens but lacked German blood were considered inferior. The Christian churches in Germany also had to deal with the implications of this philosophy: What was the status of those who had converted to Christianity, particularly from Judaism, but were not of pure German descent? This left the churches with a dilemma: How should they respond to the attempt at ethnic cleansing in Germany?

The focus of this study is on the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust and the theological Christian-ethical considerations involved. How did most Christians in Confessing Churches react to the ideologies and mandates passed down by the Nazis? What were the Christian ethical principles involved in their responses? What are the doctrines and areas of theology that need to be evaluated as part of the Confessing Church's response?

Census documents of the time reveal that most Germans were Christians of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. "The German census of May 1939 indicates that 54% of Germans considered themselves Protestant and 40% considered themselves Catholic, with only 3.4% claiming to be neo-pagan 'believers in God,' and 1.5% unbelievers" (Erickson & Heschel, 1991:10). Doris Bergen states, "More than 95% of Germans were still baptized, tax paying members of an established church" (Rittner, Smith & Steinfeldt, 2000:48) and while the Roman Catholic Church had its own response in the Concordat signed by the Pope Pius XII, (Rittner,

Smith, & Steinfeldt, 2000:59), this study will primarily focus on the Protestant Church, and specifically the Confessing Church of Germany.

To understand the vantage point of the Confessing Church, their doctrine and philosophy ought to be considered. It is imperative that one knows the language and the terminology that accurately describe the areas under investigation. It is for this reason that this chapter focuses on those philosophies and doctrines and give a basic understanding of the terms associated with them.

These questions have been asked since the dreadful event that placed its mark on history from 1933-1945. They need to be answered to determine the future responses to injustices and crimes such as these. In determining the future implications, one must consider the areas to be specifically studied. The areas that influenced the Confessing Church's response need to be examined in the cultural, physical, and social contexts.

One must first begin with a basic understanding of what ethics is. In its basic form, ethics is the moral value of what is right and wrong. Secular ethics is theoretical and Christian ethics is moral. Ethics is a theory-based discipline and Christian ethics is a moral-based philosophy. Ethics, as a philosophical study, goes back to the fifth century B.C.E. The term *ethics* comes from the Greek word *ethos* (character) and it refers to "the philosophical science that deals with the rightness and wrongness of human actions" (Roth, 1994:281). The theories of ethics help one understand the general categories of ethics. Ethics is the most general discipline of all the other studies of human behaviour such as psychology, sociology, economics, and anthropology. (Roth: 281). The study of ethics is significant since it is a historically based discipline. It assists humanity in understanding different forms of behaviour (Roth: 281).

Arthur Holmes, in his book *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*, says the following regarding an understanding of ethics in general:

Ethics is about the good (that is, what values and virtues we should cultivate) and about the right (that is, what our moral duties may be). It examines alternative views of what is good and right; it explores ways of gaining the moral knowledge we need; it asks why we ought to do right; and it brings all this to bear on the practical moral problems that arouse such thinking in the first place (Holmes, 2007:12).

He asserts that ethics is different from other social sciences. Social sciences focus on actual behaviours, that is what *is* happening, while ethics is concerned with what *should* be done. In

this study, we will examine what *was* done by the Confessing Churches during this time and what they *ought* to have done, as well as the implications for the future.

Holmes believes that religion and ethics are closely related. Religion has been a major moral influence on culture and the social sciences have come about as a result of that influence. The goal of this work is to determine what the major influences in behaviour are and how to capitalize on them so that future attempts at genocide and racism are prevented.

Since ethics and morals are related to religion in some way, it is beneficial to try to understand the connection. This link will aid in our understanding of what the Confessing Church *did* and *why*. One should also be able to ascertain what the church *should have done* based on its code of ethics. Holmes provides an example that will help understand how the two are related.

Suppose that in Nazi-occupied Holland you are hiding Jews in your attic and the Gestapo comes searching for them. Do you lie to save the innocent lives, or do you forfeit innocent lives to save lying? Whatever you do will violate some moral rule or another. How then do you choose, and to what extent are you blameworthy? Ethics addresses such questions about moral choices and exceptions to moral rules, and about the extent of moral responsibility (Rae, 2009:15).

In defining the major ethical categories, it is important to understand that each category has a Christian and a non-Christian approach. They may even overlap in areas, but it is the Christian approach that will receive most of the attention in this work. One could argue that ethical questions would not exist if were not for the moral principles found in the Bible. Others, however, might say that nature alone provides the natural influence of right and wrong without religious distinction. Therefore, it is important to consider both perspectives. However, this research will focus mainly on the Christian influence on ethics since much of Germany comprised of Confessing Christians.

For the sake of simplicity and clarity, Scott B. Rae's methodical approach to ethics from his book *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (2009), will serve as the primary systematic approach to ethics. There will be others who contribute to the definitions and clarification, but Rae's systematic approach will provide the basic guide in assisting one with little knowledge of ethics to grasp the basics of ethics, in general, and Christian ethics. The goal is to arrive at conclusions of what the Confessing Church did that was right and what it did that was wrong in its response to the ongoing extermination of the Jews.

2.2 Major ethical categories

There are four major ethical categories that are the foundation for all ethics. These four are discussed here to better understand the sub-categories. Morality and ethics are often used synonymously; but there is a fine distinction between them. Morals deal primarily with knowledge while ethics considers moral reasoning (Rae, 2009:15). Therefore, the journey to Christian ethics must begin with an overall understanding of ethics.

2.2.1 Descriptive ethics

Descriptive ethics “is a sociological discipline that attempts to describe the morals of a particular society” (15). This is typically done by studying different cultures and communities. The goal of descriptive ethics for anthropologists is to determine moral distinctives in that culture or society. It is important to note that these morals can change from one culture to another. Social norms will vary from society to society affecting social behaviour.

2.2.2 Normative ethics

Normative ethics becomes the result of the outcome of these studies on a culture. Normative ethics “refers to the discipline that produces moral norms or rules as its end product” (Rae: 15). The study of these ethical norms identifies what is right and wrong for everyone in that society. Normative ethics is prescriptive where descriptive ethics simply describes what is being observed already. Most debates about ethics arrive from normative ethics. The question of what *the moral norms should* be is the issue of debate. This is a result of comparisons from one culture to another.

2.2.3 Meta-ethics

Meta-ethics is defined as “An area of ethics that investigates the meaning of moral language, or the epistemology of ethics, and also considers the justification of ethical theories and judgments” (Rae, 2009:16). *Meta-ethics* includes terms such as right, good, and just (Rae, 2009). For instance, when one considers the Holocaust or the question of anti-Semitism, the focus is not necessarily about right or wrong but about Hitler’s disgust with the Jews. Was Hitler just in his actions? Was Himmler right in carrying out the murders of millions of people in concentration camps? These are examples of issues related to *meta-ethics*.

2.2.4 Aretaic ethics

Virtue or *aretaic ethics* focuses on “the virtues produced in individuals, not the morality of specific acts” (Rae, 2009:16). This is also referred to as *virtue theory* since *aretaic* derives from the Greek term for “virtue.” Many consider virtue and character as of equal importance. Some may even consider them as more important than resolution for a moral dilemma. Virtue and character may define the human being as being morally good or even righteous. One can certainly question the character and virtue of those in the Nazi Party who were implicated in the crimes against humanity. The virtue and character of the Christian church may also be in question. Could a person of righteous character be considered an “innocent bystander”? This is one of the questions that need to be considered when applying virtue theory to the Confessing Church’s response to the Holocaust.

2.3 Ethical systems

Ethical systems are typically categorized as either action-based, or virtue-based. These two categories may be broken down even more into three sub-categories: deontological, teleological, and relativist. Deontological is an action-based ethic while relativism is sort of a hybrid of action and virtue-based ethics. These systems are broader than will be covered in this research. Only the essential elements of these systems will be considered here. It is important that one should consider the basis of ethical systems. The issues of right and wrong in any society should be of concern to all people. It is for this reason a survey of these systems will be beneficial not only when considering the impact on the Holocaust but learning from history how these systems can be useful for future use.

2.3.1 Action-based ethics

Action-based ethics considers the greater good for the greatest number of people. Will the action or actions result in what is best for the largest number of people? In this study, the question is whether the Confessing Church’s response to the injustices done to the Jews and other minority groups resulted in the best thing for much of the German people? Did the actions of those like Dietrich Bonhoeffer result in the greater good for the majority of those oppressed? The rightness or wrongness of moral action is what is in question. One can specifically find action-based ethics in deontological ethics which is considered next.

2.3.1.1 Deontological ethics

The deontological systems focus on the principles of right and wrong within the action performed. This involves the intentions and the character of the person acting. These actions are influenced by three areas of study. They are *Divine Command Theory* (this theory will receive more attention in this study as it greatly influenced the Confessing Church), *natural law* (this area will be also studied but not to the same extent as the Divine Command Theory, and *ethical rationalism*.

This study will focus mainly on deontological ethics. This system not only incorporates the Divine Command Theory, but also addresses specific areas of concern within the Confessing Churches' response to the Holocaust. John Frame asserts that, "The deontological principle is the principle that a good deed is a response to duty, even at the price of self-sacrifice. Divine duties are necessary and universal; they take precedence over any other consideration" (2013:1143). Resisting the Nazis truly was self-sacrifice for many of the Confessing Church pastors. The problem comes when one tries to identify exactly what they were sacrificing for!

2.3.1.2 Divine Command Theory

Divine Command Theory implies exactly what it is in its name. First, it is given by God, not by humanity. Second, it is not an option or something to be considered, it is imperative. Third, it is found in God's Word. These three distinctions separate this theory from all others. This theory dominates Christianity and is also referred to as biblical ethics.

Rae comments on the Divine Command Theory saying, "A divine command system is one in which the ultimate foundation for morality is the revealed will of God, namely the commands of God as found in scripture" (Rae, 2009:47). God's character is also considered in this system, but the primary emphasis is on the will of God revealed in His Word.

Craig Vincent Mitchell also defines the Divine Command Theory, "It is a meta-ethical theory that argues that moral facts are based on God's will. It is also a normative theory that argues the will of God is authoritative. God's commands are to be obeyed" (2006:41). The Divine Command Theory was the guide for the Confessing Church since it was based on God's Word. This theory asserts that the moral compass is found in the imperatives and commands of scripture and these should be obeyed. So, the response of the Confessing Church must be measured by this theory based on the assumption that these were Christians responding to the oppressors.

He further asserts that metaphysics of morals or the good is based on God's will. The only good or right is the act that is done in accordance to God's will. Natural law also falls into this category for Mitchell. He comments that, "virtue ethics can be consistent with divine command theory" (Mitchell, 2006:42).

The commands of God are extremely important for the subject of this paper. As one will see through the chapters, the Confessing Church said many things that were consistent with the commands of God found in the Bible. In the Divine Command Theory of ethics, the Bible becomes the source of right and wrong; this was especially reinforced by the Confessing Church in the Theological Declaration at the Barmen Synod in 1934. The document, primarily written by well-known Swiss theologian and Confessing Church member Karl Barth, cites and refers to God's Word as the source of true revelation (Cochrane, 1962). More will be said on Barth and the Barmen Declaration in the chapters that follow. Here the focus remains defining deontological ethics and how the Divine Command Theory is related to the Confessing Church.

Deontological systems are based on the understanding of what is right and wrong. The Divine Command Theory is based on the premise that God's Word and commands are the source of what is right and wrong. One theologian explains the connection between God's commands and ethics in this way:

Deontological systems are ethical systems based on rules for right and wrong, what ought to be done and ought not to be done. Deontological systems can be secular (if the rules are based only on human reason and intuition) or Christian (if the rules come from God's Word, the Bible). All Christian ethical systems take God's commands in the Bible as rules that define right and wrong human conduct, and therefore all Christian ethical systems are deontological (Grudem, 2018: 41).

Although deontological systems are not exclusively Christian according to Grudem, the proposition for the systems are found in a system of rules. In Christianity, the source of the rules is the Bible. The Bible is a book filled with rules or "laws" as evidenced in the approximately 613 laws found throughout the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is particularly revealing when it comes to identifying sin or what is wrong in human behaviour. The answer to the wrong found in humankind is in the New Testament, where Jesus of Nazareth is revealed as the solution to humanity's sin. The wrong found in the Old Testament also explains the source of evil in humankind, such as that which is attributed to Adolf Hitler and the "Final Solution" or the attempted extermination of the European Jews.

One must consider the moral epistemology of the noetic effects of evil. God has placed in all of humanity moral knowledge. However, because of sin, this knowledge has been tainted and humanity tends to do that which is evil. The story of the fall of mankind into sin is found in Genesis 3:1-7:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'? The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (NASB)

This is when the moral knowledge of God was distorted by the rebellion of humankind in the Garden of Eden. It is through the Word of God that the moral knowledge originally given to humankind is reclaimed. The process of reclaiming this moral knowledge is called *sanctification*, process of growing more like God as one responds regularly in obedience to God's Word.

2.3.1.3 Natural Law

Natural law is not as easy to define as the Divine Command Theory. Natural law may be explained in this way: "First, it refers to general, objective, and widely shared moral values that are not specifically tied to the special revelation of scripture" (Rae, 2209:53). Words like justice, fairness, respect, and truth are associated with this system. These traits are embedded in the moral character of the individual.

This system is not to be confused with the previous system where there is strict adherence to a set written law or code. Rather, it refers mainly to general moral principles. The system of natural law evolves over time through history. These laws are derived from experiences, consequential events, the passing of time, and culture. These traits are widely recognized as universal general morals. The atrocities of the Holocaust provided the opportunity for the display of good will toward humankind. Is the taking of one's life right under certain conditions? A response to this question can be found in the Bible. There is a biblical basis for this found in Romans 2 beginning in verses 1-16:

Therefore, you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. *here will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honour and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (NASB).

Here Paul proclaims that those who practise unrighteousness will experience the wrath and judgment of God. He also refers to the inclination of humanity to sin and the consequences of such sins. The continual practice of sin like judging others unduly requires the judgment of God since He alone is qualified to judge. This judgment will occur through Jesus as found in Romans 2:18-32:

And know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonour God? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," just as it is written. For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So, if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the Law* and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the

heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God (NASB).

In Romans 2:14-15, one can see specifically the reference to natural law, “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do *instinctively* the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law *written in their hearts*, their *conscience* bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.” Some theologians call natural law *general revelation* that is available to all people as found in Romans 1:18-23. The absence of *special revelation* does not preclude the natural revelation found in the heart and conscience of humankind.

2.3.1.4 Ethical rationalism

The final deontological system worth mentioning is ethical rationalism or rationalism. Irving Hexham defines rationalism as, “Any theological or philosophical position which values REASON as the ultimate arbiter and judge of all statements and therefore rejects the priority of Revelation; It is a form of secular humanism” (1993:184). This theory in most cases would be considered anti-Christian due to its reliance on human ability. This theory was popularized by Immanuel Kant. Rationalism excludes the need for a religious grounding. This system is part of the deontological category and is not exclusively Christian. For this reason, this system will receive less attention in this study.

2.4 Virtue-based ethics

Virtue holds that virtue extends beyond doing the right thing to the moral agent itself. It does not look solely to the act of the moral agent but to the person performing the act. Virtue theory dates from the earliest views on ethics. Virtue theory places the emphasis on *being* not just *doing*. It relates primarily to character that is developed.

Virtue ethics looks at those who have good or virtuous behaviour and attempts to replicate that in others. Nathan R. Kollar defines virtue ethics as:

The practical approach to both understanding and living the good life that is based on conceptions of moral excellence. Virtue ethics eschews talk of rules, principles, obligation, duty, or consequences. Instead it focuses primarily on the notion of the good or virtuous person: it seeks to develop a concrete and nuanced understanding of what such a person is like, and then to use that theoretical exemplar to guide actual behaviour (2005:1563).

In some societies, virtue ethics is the result of learned behaviour that one acquires from people who do well or have right actions.

2.4.1 Teleological ethics

Teleological ethics is an *outcomes-based* system. The consequences of the event determine right or wrong. Rae states, that “Teleological systems are systems that are based on the end result produced by the action” (2006: 17). Hexham defines it simply by saying, “Related to a purpose or a designated end” (1993:214). A more detailed definition is, “An approach to moral reasoning, sometimes known as consequentialism, that asserts that the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by its outcome, namely by the amount of good it produces or evil it prevents” (Grenz & Smith, 2003:91). Consequences under this system will justify the action and/or distinguish right from wrong.

This system will be considered in this study. Some may argue that the Nazis were justified in their genocide if they were correct in thinking the Jews had a master plan to take over the world. Alternately, the attempted assassination of Hitler could be justified morally if it would prevent more evil from taking place. These are the lines of inquiry that will be considered when we evaluate the response of the Confessing Church to the Nazi holocaust. A perceived problem with this system is that it depends on the cultural context as to whether the outcome justifies the means. Results may be viewed from differing perspectives which could influence whether the outcome is viewed as right or wrong. Christian teleological or consequential ethics are associated with this perspective. Grenz defines teleological ethics as:

An approach to moral reasoning sometimes known as consequentialism, which asserts that the rightness, or wrongness, of an act is determined by the outcome, namely, by the amount of good it produces or evil it prevents. Hence, in any given situation the moral agent should inquire as to which act will produce the greatest possible balance of good over evil. Proponents of the Teleological approach differ with each other regarding whose benefit ought to be the concern of the moral agent, some arguing that one’s own good is the sole concern (ethical egoism), whereas others aver that the good of others must be considered (Utilitarianism) (Grenz & Smith, 2003:116).

The situational perspective asks the question, “What are the best means of accomplishing God’s purposes?” When applied to our case study, the question might be, “What was the Confessing Church’s best means of accomplishing God’s purposes in view of the atrocities committed against the Jews?” The Confessing Church may not have focused as much on how the Jews were being treated as how the church was going to be affected. So, it is critical to determine God’s purpose and will.

It is important to try to understand the factors that influenced the Confessing Church's resistance. Any resistance of the Confessing Church on the Holocaust was a result of a moral guideline of what is right and what is wrong. What exactly was that for the Confessing Church? Did they adhere to one moral code or were different factions influenced by a variety of influences?

2.4.2 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is based on what the greatest good for the maximum number of people is. This system falls under the teleological system of ethics. Rae defines it more specifically as "what is known as a teleological system (taken from the Greek word *telos* which means end or goal), in which morality of an act is determined by the end result" (72).

Don Habibi defines it as:

A school of philosophy that defines the good as that which is useful. Utilitarianism marks an early attempt to devise a secular, rational, scientific moral system: its influences can be attributed to its simplicity, its adaptability, and the talent of its defenders. Its most important ethical ideas are that individuals should strive for maximum pleasure and minimum pain and that society should strive to achieve the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people (2006:1531).

This system considers the general welfare for most people. Utilitarianism has become a major factor in determining public policy and social policy. It is a changing philosophy and has many forms. The criticism of utilitarianism is that it allows the possibility of gross injustice if the desired outcome is achieved. That has been a point of debate among some ethicists.

2.4.3 Ethical egoism

Ethical egoism takes a different approach and focuses on what is best for an individual. It may be defined as, "The theory that the morality of an act is determined by one's self-interest" (Rae, 2006:67). It is not the focus of this study but is mentioned because it is a virtue-based ethic.

2.4.4 Relativism

Relativism is heavily influenced by culture, "Relativism refers to an ethical system in which right and wrong are not absolute and unchanging but relates to one's culture or one's own personal preferences" (Rae, 2006:19). This is also referred to as moral subjectivism. "As a general concept, the assertion that all beliefs, opinions, judgments or claims to truth are conditioned by and dependent on contingent factors connected to the persons or groups that espouse them; the theory that the basis for all judgments varies according to time, place, and personal or group

perspective” (Grenz & Smith, 2003:80). Again, the context or culture directly affects the outcome of the event in question.

In the modern period under Nazi Germany, the culture was drastically different from that of postmodern American culture. Human behaviour was directed by the surroundings and the environment. Behaviour essentially becomes a product of culture and society. The Third Reich created the conditions in Nazi Germany to make it possible to commit the genocide of the Jews using propaganda as its main tool. The Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had the primary responsibility to fulfil Adolf Hitler’s agenda in Germany (Bauer, 2001:116-117). Hexham comments that “relativism maintains that there are no universal standards of good or bad, right or wrong, truth or error” (1993:186).

2.4.5 Moral subjectivism

Moral subjectivism refers to one’s own personal preferences. Right and wrong are based on “individual tastes and preferences” (Rae, 2009:27). In this sense it is difficult to limit morality to a personal preference. Considering that Christian ethics is derived from a supernatural source, the Bible, it is difficult to limit it to culture or personal preference. Therefore, the Christian ethic has a more universal aspect to it, different from the subjective moral view.

Subjectivism can be more clearly defined as:

A view that knowledge of the external world of objects is dependent upon the perspective and disposition of the knowing subject. It maintains that perspective is constitutive of knowledge so that objective knowledge is a contradiction in terms. This ethical judgments and moral norms are a function of the standpoint and disposition of the person making the judgment (Candelaria, 2006:1425).

In this area of ethics, judgments can be based on feelings, emotions, attitudes, and preconditioned beliefs.

2.5 Christian ethics

Christian ethics is a form of religious ethics. It began with the first century and continues to the present. It is notably identified with Jesus of Nazareth. Roth defines Christian ethics as “The beliefs and practices of Christianity, generally emphasizing the oneness and primacy of God, the prevalence of human sin, redemption in Christ, and self-giving love as the highest virtue. Christianity acknowledges the depth of suffering in all of life yet affirms life’s ultimate meaningfulness; no longer dominant in Western culture since 1800, it nevertheless continues to be broadly influential in most world cultures” (1994:147).

Christianity has become a buzz word for many belief systems and denominations that claim to follow the teachings of Christ and the practices of the early Christian churches. Christian ethics, while being broadly claimed, is exclusively identified with the teachings found in scriptures, for example *The Sermon on the Mount* found in Matthew 5-7. In these chapters one can find a strong emphasis on the direct ethical teachings of Jesus. Here, Christ calls His followers to be different from the world in character and conduct by using phrases such as “The salt of the earth; light of the world; trust God not money; pray secretly; and murder is condemned as well as hatred” (Roth, 1994:147).

Another emphasis found in this same section of scripture is focused on love:

It is commonplace to say that Christian ethics is an ethics of *love* - love of God, love of neighbour, and love of self. When asked to summarize the Law, Jesus quoted the Jewish scripture: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbour as yourself.’ This is not the same love as desire (*eros*) or kinship (*philia*); it is a self-giving love (*agape*) that creates and finds fulfilment in the other. Even more important than Jesus’ teachings, however, are what he did and what happened to him - his life, death and resurrection. His life, characterized by healing, power, suffering, forgiveness, obedience, and ultimate submission to a humiliating death by crucifixion-followed by the ultimate triumph of resurrection-has been taken by countless Christians as the pattern for their own lives” (Roth, 1994:147).

Roth continues with his description of Christian ethics as he discusses *the primacy of God and the universality of sin*. God is described in the scriptures as just, powerful, and merciful. He is called the creator of the universe and everything in it. This means that humans have no rights or power apart from Him. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (NASB). Prior to this passage in Romans 3:23, the apostle Paul says that all have sinned and offended God. The depravity of man requires God’s redemption. The tension with culture arises from the teachings of Christ, particularly between the Sermon on the Mount and the basic cultural practices. For instance, the teachings of Christ command that one loves his enemies and pray for them. However, human nature is inclined to seek revenge on those who harm or threaten it. Sometimes there is a disconnect between religion and culture or society. Christianity, once illegal in the first century, grew to be a dominant religion through the nineteenth century (Roth, 1994:147).

How do Christians respond to this tension today? Roth comments on this by stating:

Christian ethics seem to have taken one of three basic responses to these tensions: (1) it can take the path of cooperation and compromise, becoming part of the power structure and working through the culture, as have medieval Roman

Catholicism and nineteenth century American Protestantism; (2) it can take the path of withdrawal, separation and purity, removing itself into separate communities and then either attacking the surrounding culture or ignoring it; or (3) it can take the path of inner withdrawal into the self, as medieval mystics and contemporary intellectuals who emphasize personal spirituality have done (2009:147-148).

A culture that does not identify with the teachings of Christ relies on other sources for morality and human behaviour. This conflict is perennial and will continue as long as there are those who espouse a secular basis for their beliefs and those who are Christian in their orientation. Sadly, most of the people in Nazi Germany identified with Christianity but did not resist the ungodly atrocities committed by the government.

John Frame points out three areas of Christian ethics that theologians and ethicists have identified. He considers these to be the main types of Christian ethics. The first area is *command ethics*. This emphasizes God's moral law. Here the law becomes the standard and authority for the ethical dilemma. The second is *narrative ethics*. Narrative ethics tells the story of God's redemption throughout history. The focus is on the history of salvation as defined in the Bible. The third category of Christian ethics is the focus of this work, *virtue ethics*. Virtue ethics focuses on the character of the person who has been faced with ethical decisions. The primary spotlight is on the inner beliefs and qualities of those under consideration. These three areas are major influences in Christian ethical responses (Frame, 2008:31).

Considerations of virtue will play a major role in this study. There are many passages in the Bible that describe the virtues of a Christian such as Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 5:22-23; and Colossians 3:12-17. These passages are the core of the biblical virtues of the Confessing Church that we will consider.

2.5.1 Old Testament ethics

The Old Testament embodies much of what Christian ethics is. Some have erroneously concluded that with the coming of Christ and the writing of the New Testament, the Old Testament became obsolete. They are incorrect; the Old Testament was the primer for the New Testament. Under the Old Covenant of the Law, moral and civil laws were established. They are interrelated ethically. The primary passage that delineates the ethical expectations God had is found in Exodus 20:3-17 and is commonly referred to as *The Ten Commandments*:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down

to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you (ESVUK).

There are other places where moral guidance is offered in wisdom literature and poetic literature, but for purposes of clarity and space this study will focus on the guiding principles found in the Exodus passage.

Do these laws only apply to Israel or do they apply to all Christians? This is an important question that will have a response in the next section. If one just uses this passage alone, the first law is significant when considering the Confessing Church's response. Is it acceptable to murder to save other lives? That is the question that Bonhoeffer faced:

The well-known German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer seems to use the reasoning like this to explain his personal involvement in the attempt to assassinate Hitler toward the end of World War II. In his writing Bonhoeffer defended non-violence as the "cost of discipleship." He made it clear that he considered it one of the non-negotiable components of faithfully following Christ. Yet he was one of the conspirators in the plot to kill Hitler in order to stop the evil of Nazism and the genocide of the Jews. He saw himself as caught between two evils - using violence and allowing Nazism and genocide to continue. He reasoned he felt obligated to choose the lesser evil and participate in the use of violence against Hitler. He saw the danger in pacifism allowing evil to go unchecked but also saw his use of violence against Hitler as the lesser evil and thus his moral duty (Roth, 2009:318).

One can see the great dilemma that lies with making moral decisions. Bonhoeffer was only one of the many Confessing Christians who took this aggressive stance, the majority of whom were either imprisoned, and/or killed. Others were unwilling to take any action placing them in the category of bystander which will be commented on in following chapters.

2.5.2 New Testament ethics

In the New Testament, there is a shift from the Old Covenant for Israel to the New Covenant for the church. The primary New Testament ethic is found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew chapters 5-7. This was one of Bonhoeffer's guiding passages which he wrote about in

The Cost of Discipleship, 1937. Jesus called for an individual denial of self and submission to His Lordship which meant obeying His commands. One of the primary traits that the church is to follow is humility. Christ demonstrated humility by becoming flesh and it is in obedience to this command that the church mimics humility in sacrificially denying self.

Another example of the New Testament ethic is Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (ESVUK). These virtues are encouraged by the Apostle Paul as a guide to living the Christian life. In both the Sermon on the Mount and the Fruit of the Spirit passages, one can see a more passive approach to ethics. Therefore, Bonhoeffer was struggling with the appropriate response to the Nazi's.

2.6 Ethics summary

The Confessing Church faced moral dilemmas during the Holocaust. To understand these dilemmas, one must understand ethics. What is right and what is wrong? What moral code does the church have to go by? The answer to these questions requires a basic understanding of ethics in general. Did the moral injustices excuse aggressive action to be taken against Adolf Hitler and the Nazis? A review of the structure of ethics will be covered here in summary.

It will help to review the four major categories of ethics. First, *descriptive ethics* which describes the ethics found in a culture. Second, *normative ethics* is the prescribed ethic for a situation. Where descriptive ethics describes the moral behaviour, normative ethics prescribes behaviour for the circumstances. Third, *meta-ethics* focuses on ethical terms such as right, good, wrong, or justice. Meta-ethics considers the ethical language that is used. Fourth is *aretaic or virtue ethics*. These are the major ethical categories (Rae, 2009:15). The author recommends further study on these topics to enhance the reader's understanding.

There are two major classifications or types of ethical systems. They are either *action-oriented* or *virtue-based* systems. The *deontological system* is action-oriented; it further sub-divides into three systems. *Divine command theory* is based on the Bible and focuses on such primary passages as The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. *Natural law* is God's revelation found outside of the Bible. Finally, *ethical rationalism*, a system originally introduced by Immanuel Kant, is focused on the concept that actions are based on good will, not on religious principle. The teleological system is outcome-based focusing on consequences influencing action. The essence is that no action is fundamentally right or wrong. We also gave

a cursory look at *relativism*, in which one's actions are essentially based on cultural norms (Rae, 2009:17).

Most of the discussion in this research will focus on what the Bible says, therefore, a virtue or aretaic ethical approach will be examined, especially when considering the Confessing Church's responses to the Holocaust. Since Christian ethics are primarily a Divine Command Theory approach, we will study this deontological approach as well.

What does the Bible say about virtue and morality? That will be a major point in this paper. Other systems may offer some value, but an argument can be made that of all the people in Germany during the time of the Holocaust, the moral agents in churches should have resisted this horror. Often people look to the church to lead in moral clarity. Some ethicists do not use morality and ethics synonymously, but here they will be interchangeable.

In the next chapter an important consideration will be given to the German Church's struggle with the Holocaust. The focus will be on the reason for the struggle and the division that it caused.

CHAPTER 3 A GERMAN CHURCH DIVIDED

3.1 Overview

What happened to the Confessing Church during the Holocaust has great significance for churches today. Their experience is critical in answering the ethical question of how to respond to genocide and totalitarianism. The term Protestant is based on “protest” and although there were some isolated cases of protest by the Confessing Church, they did not protest to the point of making a meaningful difference in dealing with the Holocaust. The Protestant Church’s foundation is its conviction of *sola scriptura* (scripture alone) and its commitment to biblical authority. The well-documented, horrific events of the Holocaust are contrary to scriptures such as the Ten Commandments, found in the Old Testament and the Sermon on the Mount found in the New Testament. It is difficult to envision that the command to *love your neighbour as yourself* was honoured by those who were purifying the German society of non-Aryan people. Unfortunately, many of the church members of the time were what Victoria J. Barnett refers to as *bystanders*. In other words, they were indifferent to the events surrounding the Holocaust or at least they were not burdened enough to do something about it (Barnett, 2000:9-11).

There were some who opposed certain elements of the Holocaust. The Pastor’s Emergency League which ultimately became The Confessing Church broke from the German Protestant Church, is one example of Resistance. Why did the Pastor’s Emergency League not do more than passively resist the Nazis? This split was not directly related to the harsh treatment of the Jews and minorities in Germany; it was primarily about state control of the church and who was defined as Christian based on the new citizenship laws established in Nuremburg. Citizenship laws and the limitations placed on the churches were at the core of the split. The state imposed a limitation on allowing Jews to become Christians and the Confessing Church disagreed, hence, the impetus for the split.

The Holocaust and the division of the Protestant Church in Germany did not happen overnight. There were a series of events that led to both the Holocaust and the division of the Protestant Church. Is there a correlation with the Holocaust and the division of the Church? One can make this argument valid by looking at the number of citizens that were associated with both the Catholic and Protestant churches. More will be said on this, but here let it suffice to say that there were enough professing Christians in Germany during these years that resistance would not have been a question of possibility, but one of probability.

World War I (The Great War) and the resulting Treaty of Versailles allowed for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Events evolved over time and it is hard to find a well-documented source that reveals a clear path to genocide and the atrocities that took place. The Holocaust took place from 1933-1945 and the plan to remove the Jews and other minorities was a process that happened and took place over the years that Hitler was in control.

3.1 The Weimar years and church influence

The years from 1918-1933 were an era known as the Weimar Republic in Germany. Imperial Germany had collapsed and was replaced by the Democratic Weimar Republic. This ushered in the integration of the Jews into every area of society. Along with their integration, anti-Semitism flourished in Germans. This was a good time for the Jews both socially and politically, but it would come with devastating consequences (Kulka & Hildesheimer, 1990:559). The Weimar years were difficult years for the German people and were a contributing factor to Hitler's success in the National Socialists party. One author summed up these years this way:

Following World War I this was Germany's political structure. The governing power rested with the country's Chancellor, the German President retained a veto power and performed ceremonial duties, with the German Parliament or Reichstag provided more of an advisory role than legislative one. The Weimar government retained power until Hitler and the Nazi Party gained control of Germany in 1933 (Fischel & Ortmann, 2004:317).

Many blamed the economic, social, and political problems of Germany on the Weimar Republic, especially those who supported the Nationalist movement that sought to replace The Weimar Republic. But the grass is not always greener on the other side and many would soon learn that the totalitarian government of Hitler was not the solution that had been promised.

3.1.1 World War I

After World War I, Germany found itself in a precarious position and unrest was developing rapidly among the population. Conservative church leaders were faced with socialists (Social Democrats (SPD) and Independent Social Democrats (USPD), who promoted secular ideas. Secularist Adolf Huffman was appointed Prussian Minister of Education and Public Worship in November 1918 by the USPD. His intentions were clear from the beginning. Among these were to cut state funding of the church, to limit the practice of religious activities in schools, to ban religious and theological instruction from the universities, and to remove the requirement for students to attend worship services (Osterroth, 1960:136-137). One can see the stage being set for the restrictions that the Nazis would implement later as they grew in power.

Protests from both Protestants and Catholics would result in the removal of Huffman from power. The government compromised and said that although there would no longer be state churches, churches were still to receive subsidies from the state. Universities continued to exist with the option for parents and students to opt out of religious education. Another result was that church leadership would be elected by church synods rather than being appointed by the state. In 1922 the Protestant Church in Germany formed the German Evangelical Church Confederation (*Landeskirchen*), comprising 28 churches.

It was also during these years of unrest that the German people became discontented with the social, political, religious and civil climate of Germany. In many minds the blame in part or in whole was placed on the Jews. The Jews had been painted as completely anti-German, especially when it came to religion. Unfortunately, the German heritage that went all the way back to the Reformation and Martin Luther saw the Jews as Christ-killers. Nazi influence only fuelled these flames. Even confessing Church leaders such as Otto Dibelius admitted their discontent with the Jews (Evans, 2005:222). The Nazis did not fully reveal their anti-Semitic views early on, but they certainly grew as Hitler became more entrenched and he was able to implement his "Hitler's Programme."

The Nazis contested a divided national Protestant church. The church was separated over issues during the Weimar years such as education, welfare, mixed marriages and religious practices that opposed national fervour (Evans, 2005:221). "The German Evangelical Church seemed to the Nazis to offer an almost perfect vehicle for the religious unification of the German people" (220). The fusion of the Lutheran and Calvinists traditions had already taken place and German churches owed no real ecumenical allegiance outside Germany; they had maintained a mostly conservative position. In the Bismarckian years (1871-1890), the King of Prussia had control over the Prussian church. At this time Germany was viewed as a Protestant state. Many viewed nationalism as the primary goal except for a few in the Reformed Protestant church.

Martin Niemöller was a national Protestant who fought in World War I as a U-boat commander and initially supported Adolf Hitler. It was clear that his return from the war left some bitter feelings against the Weimar Republic (Hockenos, 2018). He was typical of men coming back from war wanting to see Germany reclaim its national pride. Niemöller saw an opportunity for a political and spiritual renewal in Germany. In 1931 prior to Hitler's official chancellorship, Niemöller became the pastor at a prominent church in Dahlem in Berlin. He cared for the lower classes as much as he did for the upper class of the Dahlem church. Niemöller voted for Hitler

in 1933 in hope of a national revival. The war penalties of the Treaty of Versailles and the apparent failure of the Weimar Republic swayed his vote. Evans comments:

His sermons of this period took up the Nazi call for a united, positive Christianity that would overcome the religious divisions that had plagued Germany for so many years. And he echoed the Nazi claim that the Jews had been unduly influential in the Weimar Republic. In 1935 he sermonized about the poisonous influence of the Jews in world history, the outcome, he thought, of the curse that had lain on them since the Crucifixion (Evans, 2005:222).

Later Niemöller would see the error of his stance on the Jewish Question.

First, they took the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I said nothing. Then they took the Social Democrats, but I was not a social Democrat, so I did nothing. Then it was the Trade unionists' turn but I was not a trade unionist. And then they took the Jews, but I was not a Jew, so I did little. Then when they came and took me, there was no one left who could have stood up for me (Evans, 2005:232-233).

Martin Niemöller would learn that his initial vote for Hitler and his continual silence was a cause for regret. There is a hint of regret in this statement over his lack of support for the Jews. This would also be communicated in the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt.

The Declaration at Stuttgart revealed his sorrow for his stance in these earlier years. The translation of the Declaration states at one point the conviction of Niemöller and those who signed it.

With great pain we say: By us infinite wrong was brought over many peoples and countries. That which we often testified to in our communities, we express now in the name of the whole Church: We did fight for long years in the name of Jesus Christ against the mentality that found its awful expression in the National Socialist regime of violence; but we accuse ourselves for not standing to our beliefs more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently (Hockenos, 2004:187).

Eleven pastors signed this declaration. It clearly shows there was an awareness of wrongdoing. It does not specify however the specific areas of improper response, but it certainly identifies that the Confessing Church and the Protestants did not do all they could to prevent the atrocities of the Holocaust. Niemöller would even later say "Christianity in Germany bears a greater responsibility before God than the National Socialists, the SS, and Gestapo. We ought to have recognized the Lord Jesus in the brother who suffered and was persecuted despite him being a Communist or a Jew" (Lecture in Zurich, Switzerland, March 1946):

Within a couple of years, the Nazi Party was able to work within the democratic system to destroy the Weimar Republic from the inside. What makes the rise of the Third Reich so important to study is that the Nazis never took power by force.

In fact, every action taken by the NSDAP was supported by a large portion of the German people. Rather than seizing power through a *coup d'état* or other forceful methods, the politically adept Hitler took his time to hijack democracy piece by piece. When considering contemporary political parties, it is important to remember that a leading political movement has more power than simply the ability to rule. Rather, it has the ability to completely and utterly destroy the systems that created it. The rise of the Nazi party is a perfect example of this phenomenon (*Georgetown University's Journal of Undergraduate History Research*, 2018).

Atheistic indoctrination was the greatest concern for the Protestant churches. This manifested itself primarily in Marxism. Norma Corigliano Noonan defines Marxism as:

A set of theories and practices espoused by, or associated with, Karl Marx, including historical materialism, the elimination of private property, and a commitment to bringing about a classless society. Classical Marxism was a revolutionary philosophy founded in a commitment to universal equality and justice. The actual governments that have come into being espousing Marxist principles, however, have often deviated from those ideals to such an extreme that the very meaning of the term has become a subject of significant controversy (2005:905).

Marxism defied many of the principles of Nazi ideology. Many Germans, to include Protestants like Niemöller, espoused the concepts of racial superiority and class distinction. This most certainly reveals the conventional wisdom of many of the Germans during this time. The Jews were viewed as a lower class of people, with materialistic values. Many leading Protestants such as Bishop Theophil Wurm viewed the Third Reich as the opportunity to ensure that these Jews did not influence the German churches. The Nazi ideology presented the concept of Positive Christianity and the Protestants did not want to be at odds with Hitler at this time (Evans, 2005:222). Their ultimate goal was a fight against Jewish materialism. Protestants performed mass baptisms that were minimal during the Weimar years. The number of Protestants in Germany was approximately 40 million during the years 1933-45 (222). The number of Protestants certainly influenced the Nazi vote with all the national concerns surrounding the elections. The Nazis used this support to their advantage and organized a celebration of the reformer Martin Luther, who in his later years, wrote about the Jews in a negative fashion (Evans, 221). It was the 450th anniversary of his birth and a rallying point for German Protestants. Other celebrations were held to encourage Protestants in their support for the Nazis.

3.2 Nazi Influence

In its infancy, many Protestants supported the Nazi party with their voting ballots in the elections of 1932 and 1933. National Socialism was not only accepted but embraced. It is important to

understand what nationalism is: "Loyalty to a nation and devotion to that nation's interests over those of all other nations" (Akomolafe, 2005:1005). This explains much of the thought process for the Nazis and Germans after WW I. It is also helpful to fully understand what socialism is since these two were paired together in the previous statements. Socialism is defined here as, "A political and economic system characterized by collective ownership of the means of production and equitable distribution of goods and resources" (Dello Buono, 2006:1391). When the two are combined one sees the National Socialist as one who highly values their country but seeks to promote social justice.

In the Nazi party, there was a desire to seek total sovereign control through the state. Its aim was to exterminate those who were not of pure German blood and race. This appealed to many Germans after the war including a large contingent of churches and church leaders. Some Protestants such as Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer resisted the idea that the state should have total or sovereign control over the church. They advocated for a biblical position (Evans, 2005:222-225). Little did they know that the Nazi party was not the least bit concerned about Christianity and observing its doctrine.

It appeared from the beginning that Hitler wanted the church to prosper. Many church leaders including Martin Niemöller and Otto Diebellus backed Hitler thinking he would support the churches. Unfortunately, this was not the case and the Nazis had deceived the churches and did not offer support and eventually suppressed the church's influence (Evans, 2005:220). Other church leaders like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his family never did support National Socialism, but they were in the minority. Dietrich's father Karl was adamantly opposed to the Nazi party. Karl, a recognized mental health professional, was outspoken about his views (Metaxas, 2011). Bonhoeffer was directly involved in the Confessing Church and at times, regardless of his young age, was one of the church leaders that recognized the great differences between the German Christians and the Confessing Church.

Hitler made an attempt to demonstrate his willingness to work with church leaders by having many of them to his office for what was supposed to be an opportunity at unification. The problem was that Herman Göring ambushed Niemöller with a recording of a phone conversation that happened with Niemöller prior to the meeting. By the end of the meeting, it was everything but positive for Niemöller and the Protestant church (Bergen, 2009).

Richard J. Evans comments on the Nazi desire for unification in church matters. He states:

The Nazis abhorred the Confessional division of Germany, and, in an obvious parallel to their policy of co-ordination in secular areas of politics, culture and society, many of them wanted a single national religion with a single national Church. The division, they believed had deepened under The Weimar Republic during bitter conflicts over issues such as education, welfare, mixed marriages and local religious processions, undermining the national will (Evans, 220).

Hitler wanted everyone to share his worldview. It was his goal to bring all the people along with the National Socialist Party programme. Whether or not his intentions for the Jews were as strong in the beginning is hard to know. One thing was for sure, he wanted all the German people to follow him unconditionally and to embrace pride in Germany. His influence grew with every promise and was buttressed using propaganda. There is no solid consensus about what his intention for the church was originally, but it was his goal to get rid of everything that hindered his worldview.

Doris L. Bergen is not as quick to place all the blame on the war or the Weimar Republic as some do. She lists some pre-conditions that warrant consideration. For Bergen it was about race and space. Hitler sought to purify the racial blood of the German people. He also sought to gain more territory for the German people (Bergen, 2009:36).

According to Bergen, there are two lines of thinking that describe how the Holocaust was allowed to happen: *intentionalists* and *functionalists*. The intentionalists believe that Hitler had intentions from the very beginning to purify the German race and rid Germany of the socially unfit. His planning began in the 1920s and continued through to the end of World War II. They theorize that the Holocaust was always a part of Hitler's master plan. Functionalists, on the other hand, posit that the Holocaust evolved over time and was a reaction to unplanned conditions. For instance, the Weimar Republic created problems in German culture and that evolved into greater complications. The same can be said of the war; it evolved into a series of issues that ultimately led to the Holocaust. Still others posit a combination of the two (Bergen, 2009:30).

World War I had a disastrous effect on Germany. The war was lost by Germany and the Treaty of Versailles put them in a nationally frustrating state of mind. Reparations left Germany in both economic and social difficulties. There were war reparations that had to be paid in the sum of 132 billion gold marks. The military was restricted to prevent further war threats. The years beyond 1919 were uncertain for the German people. They were embarrassed and nationally restricted. This was fertile ground for the germination of National Socialism and Hitler took advantage of the situation. Many Germans also believed that the Weimar Republic was partially

responsible for their current situation and still others, including Hitler, sought to place the blame for Germany's difficulties on the Jews (Barnett, 1992:19).

During the Holocaust the church was divided over several issues. Church factions resulted in the Protestant church dividing into different sects. The group that remained faithful to the Nazis became known as the German Christians. These were Protestant Germans. The Pastor's Emergency League developed from a split with the German Christians. This group opposed the measures of the Nazi party and Hitler's idea of Positive Christianity. This was the notion that the Protestant Church would fall under the ideology of the Third Reich and ultimately would have one Reich Bishop that controlled the churches. The Catholic Church operated independently of the Protestant churches and ultimately signed the Concordat between Pope Leo and the German government. This resulted in failed relations between the Nazis and the Catholic Church. Since the focus of this study is on the Confessing Church, we will not explore this topic. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the divide among the Protestant churches over Nazi measures put in place to control the Protestant churches.

As has been mentioned, many of the Protestants chose to be bystanders. Some became bystanders from fear of persecution, national pride, indifference, and some believed there eventually would be church reform. A small group of pastors led by Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer formed the Pastor's Emergency League (PEL). As the situation progressed toward a Reich Church, The PEL morphed into a Confessing Church. One of the primary reasons they morphed into the Confessing Church was to draw a clear division with the German Christians. The Confessing Church adopted its own doctrinal confession (Conway, 2001:492). The issues that concerned the Confessing Church were primarily not focused on what was being done to the Jews as a whole, but only those who had been baptized and converted to Christianity. Another issue was the autonomy of the church. They did not want a state-controlled church. The Confessing Church would be the main Protestant opposition to Nazi policies. We will now examine the policies of Hitler for the church as well as the response of the Protestant churches. Remember, a majority of Germany was considered Christian during this time.

3.2.1 Positive Christianity

Positive Christianity was an attempt to restructure the established church presence in Germany. The idea of Positive Christianity was considered to replace the traditional Protestant and Catholic churches with a non-denominational Christianity that was purged of Jewish influence (Evans, 2005:220). One can hardly take Christianity as it is and remove the Jewish elements.

The Bible is basically a Jewish book, replete with references to God's interaction with the Jews over thousands of years. Part of Hitler's platform in 1920 was to combat "negative" Christianity with "positive" Christianity (Barnett, 1992: 26). This resulted in what was called *Gleichschaltung*, which was essentially the slow progression of Nazi ideology into all German culture.

3.2.2 Gleichschaltung

To complement Hitler's rise to power and the implementation of the Nazi agenda, he enacted *Gleichschaltung*. This literally means "switching into the same gear" (Barnett, 1992:30). This affected all of German society. This was a systematic approach to bring all of Germany in line with his National Socialists ideology and Anti-Semitism. This methodical approach had many variables to it. Wolfgang Gerlach gives us a succinct definition of *Gleichschaltung*: "The legal process of synchronization placing all aspects of German life under Nazi control and direction" (Gerlach, 2000:288). This could also be associated with "Nazification" (Hockenos, 2018). This was the process in Germany and the church of implementing Nazi ideology into every area of life. After the World War II, the Allied Forces were faced with the "de-Nazification" of Germany (Hockenos, 2018). This was more challenging when Hitler was alive, and the laws were being strictly enforced by the Storm Troopers (SS).

One variable was the systematic changing of the laws that enabled his programme to be implemented. For example, citizenship laws required that all people would satisfy strict ancestry requirements to be German citizens. Essentially their ancestry determined their citizenship. Mainly the focus was on the grandparents of the individual in question. If their grandparent was a Jew, they were considered non-Aryan. This had a profound effect on the church. The church could no longer allow Jews, whether converted or not, to serve as clergy. Another requirement was for all people to become members of the Nazi party.

3.3 Reich Church

Hitler believed that the answer to moral problems in German society, such as social, economic, and political unrest, was to bring the Protestant church under one Reich Church (Hayes, 2010). In the beginning this appeared to be admirable, but as time went on, many were concerned that the Reich Church was more about infusing Nazi ideology into the church while removing all Jewish influences from Christianity than being Christian. Christianity was viewed as weak by the Nazis. They attempted to influence the church and to make it racially pure. To them, even Jesus was weak since he had been taken by the Romans and crucified. In the eyes of the Nazis, Christianity was a weak religion, due to its passive nature.

3.3.1 Reich Bishop

Hitler wanted the Reich Church to be led by one Reich Bishop who would oversee the polity of the Protestant churches. Hitler picked Bishop Ludwig Muller to be elected as the Reich Bishop. The elections did not go as Hitler had hoped for and Muller lost the initial election. The next move was for the Nazis to influence the elections and ultimately Muller was elected (Evans, 2005:221). Muller came in place of the nominee Fritz von Bodelschwingh who won the majority vote in the beginning. Hitler's aggressive influence pushed Muller to the front to lead the church as Reich Bishop. Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister, also played a key role in Muller obtaining the position (Evans, 223).

3.4 German Church's reaction

With the election of the Reich Bishop, the German Church began to split. Some German Christians were supportive of the movement while others like Niemöller opposed the move in fear of state interference in the church. The German Christians supported the citizenship laws against the Jews, and even some Protestant churches did as well. Niemöller stood firm on the idea that the Jews who had converted to Christianity were equally part of the Christian church as those of any other cultural descent (Evans, 2005:221-223). The German church became divided over many things. They were divided over the place of national pride in the church, the place of the Jews in the church, race, and bloodlines. They were divided over state control of the church, as well as doctrine and theology. They were also divided over racial and cultural prejudice. These divisions only increased as the Nazis continued to grow in influence and power.

3.4.1 Complicity

A study of the Protestant Church in general and the Confessing Church during this time reveals that there was virtually no attempt to restrain the events that were happening, such as the anti-Semitic legislation and the exploitation of the Jews. This seems to suggest that either they were supportive of what was happening or were indifferent (bystanders). A bystander is someone who sees what is happening but does not participate physically in the events. By the lack of participation or resistance, they pretended that things are not as they seem.

It appears that this was the stance that most Germans took including those in the church. There were minimal protests or resistance. Since there were few resistance efforts organized to stop the events, one could assume they supported it or simply did not have enough concern to actively resist like Bonhoeffer did. There were two occasions that will be mentioned here that

were evidence of some resistance and one will be explained in more detail in the final chapter. The first was the attempt at Reich Bishop Muller to replace Bishops Wurm and Meiser after the Reich Bishop's election, with two German Christians. Wurm had received the popular support of the bishops and it appeared that Muller in his insecurity tried to remove him. He was resisted and when word reached Hitler, Hitler had Muller and his assistant August Jager placed under home arrest while he reinstated Wurm and Meiser (Hayes, 2010:254). The resistance from the other church leaders caused Hitler to respond in a positive way.

The second was the T-4 Program or the Euthanasia Programme. The programme as will be described in more detail in the final chapter was the systematic extermination of those who were considered useless for German society. The mentally and physically challenged infants to adults were euthanized based on the professional opinion of mental and physical health doctors. This systematic murder was done without the knowledge or consent of the parents, guardians or next of kin. Once the programme became public due to the concern of two Confessing Church members, Hitler halted it. The programme was reinstated, but for a period Hitler allowed the resistance to influence his decision (Hayes, 2010:254). One can only imagine what might have happened if more were to have resisted.

As it was, few people resisted. There were isolated cases, but it appears the overwhelming majority had no real visible response to what was taking place. Many post-war Germans said they had no idea what was happening. Victoria Barnett has done a tremendous amount of work on the Confessing Church and the Holocaust. Her summation of a bystander based on a comprehensive study is:

Bystanders are confronted by a wide range of behavioural options, and they bear some responsibility for what happens. They may intervene to change the course of events. They may be apathetic, feeling that what is occurring has nothing to do with them. Or their emotions may be in turmoil: they may feel torn with anxiety, caught between a strong desire not to become involved and the sense that they should do something. Other factors may influence their failure or readiness to help: the presence of people around them; feelings of powerlessness or fear; and a sense of identification with the victim or, conversely indifference or active prejudice against the victim (2000:10).

At the end of the war when the Allied Forces invaded Germany, many Germans claimed they were ignorant of what had been taking place "behind those walls." One could argue that there was no way that an estimated 11 million people were killed, and one could be ignorant of it! The truth is that most people fell into this category of bystander, including the Christian population. Neither Catholics nor Protestants made a concerted effort to stop the events, even though many

knew or should have known that they were happening. There were stories of reports given to Pope Pius of what was taking place in Poland and other areas, but there was no action taken (Bergen, 2009:132). One might ask what they could really have done against such a strong Nazi presence. With an estimated 90% of the population having been “professing Christians,” one would think that resistance could have been attempted with some degree of success, based on the previous examples given, such as the protest against the T-4 Programme.

There were people who hid Jews in their homes, took care of them with food and water, sheltered them, and even helped relocate them (Conway, 2001: 496-498). Nothing on a large scale has been recorded though. The fact that this was not a large-scale effort but only had token resistance suggests that most were bystanders. What if the resistance had been on a massive scale? Could the outcome have been changed? What exactly was it that kept most people indifferent? In the next section it will be proposed that National Socialism and National pride was one of the primary reasons many were non-resistant (Hayes, 2010).

3.4.2 National pride

One reason for most of the people, including the church, not being actively involved was their commitment to the restoration of Germany. When Hitler took office as chancellor in 1933, Germany was not in good health. It was a country whose pride had been damaged due to the economic, social, and cultural conditions that resulted from World War I. The Treaty of Versailles not only left Germany with heavy economic and militaristic sanctions, but it also restricted the territory they could occupy. This was a total embarrassment to the people of Germany, and it gave Hitler a strong platform for his agenda. All these conditions were part of Hitler’s strategy to rebuild the country. He wanted to restore the national pride of Germany, and that meant getting rid of the racially impure Jews among others. As previously mentioned, it came down to race and pure German blood. Hitler wanted to claim more territory as well as to build a prominent race of people.

3.4.3 Indifference

Most of the attention has been on the Jews and their treatment during the Holocaust; however other minority groups had also been affected. Indifference may be hard to imagine, but it played a role in society and the church. It is easier to see indifference in society, but the indifference that was found in the church is hard to fathom. Did the church have a responsibility to resist what was being done actively? A portion of the church certainly was willing to act out against the baptised Jews that had become part of the Protestant Church, but what about the other Jews,

gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, the physically and mentally challenged, as well as other minority groups? In Matthew 22 Christ calls His followers to “love their neighbour as their self” (paraphrase). Who is one’s neighbour seems to be the question. The story of the Good Samaritan reveals that it is anyone in need at any time. If ever there was a time for the church to demonstrate this principle or be obedient to this command, it was during the Holocaust. It goes back to the argument from Christian ethics, that what would have been right was to help those being oppressed. Maybe the reason the Christians and the Confessing Church did not resist more aggressively was because many still held the traditional Lutheran and cultural views of Germany that the Jews and others were not valuable enough to help (Hayes, 2015:11-115).

3.4.4 Anti-Semitism

The Holocaust was partially fuelled by a strong anti-Semitic mind-set. Many people use this term with no idea of its origin or its true meaning. Wilhelm Marr coined the word in 1879. A definition that will help in this study is as follows:

In literal terms it denotes opposition to Semites. This would include Arabs, as well as other Semitic populations. However, its meaning is usually connected with the hostility felt toward Jews. Marr’s intention for the word was to distinguish between Christianity’s aversion to the Jews, and repugnance toward Jews based on race (Fischel & Ortman, 2004:304).

Based on the Nazi concept of anti-Semitism, race and nationality played a large part in political identity. It also stated that the differences found between non-Jews and Jews were irreconcilable. This led to the hostility of many in Europe, especially in Germany during this time, towards Jews. This affected the Jews socially, politically, and economically. The Jews were restricted in their civil responsibilities as well as professionally. They were ostracized as professionals, which eroded their financial stability (Bergen, 2009). Therefore, many struggled financially and eventually came to complete financial ruin. In the following chapters, it will become apparent that the goal of the German people was to re-establish their national pride.

Anti-Semitism was not new. Jewish persecution has been recorded in the ancient and medieval worlds, through the Renaissance and Reformation. It continued through the Enlightenment and Emancipation eras (Laqueur, 2001:16-20). While it was present during these time periods, the height of anti-Semitism was from the years following World War I in 1918 and beyond World War II 1945. John W. De Gruchy, in his edited, *Witness to Christ*, by Bonhoeffer, captures the essence of Bonhoeffer’s thoughts on the Jewish question as it relates to the State in the following statement:

The fact unique in history, which the Jew has been made subject to special laws by the state solely because of the race to which he belongs and quite apart from his religious beliefs, raises two new problems for the theologian, which must be examined separately. What is the church's attitude to this action by the state? And what should the church do as a result of it? That is one question. The other is what attitude should the church take to its members who are baptized Jews? Both questions can only be answered in light of a true concept of the church.

Without doubt, the church of the Reformation has no right to address the state directly in its specifically political actions. It has neither to praise nor censure the laws of the state, but must rather affirm the state to be God's order of preservation in a Godless world; it has to recognize the state's ordinances, good or bad as they appear from a humanitarian point of view, and understand that they are based on the sustaining will of God amidst the chaotic godlessness of the world (Bonhoeffer, 1991:1826-1831).

De Gruchy has compiled the works of Bonhoeffer to capture the essence of his theology as it relates to the Jews, the Church, and the State. He has also written on the influence of Bonhoeffer and his theology in South Africa.

3.5 Protestant Churches

The first half of the twentieth century in Europe brought about changes in the Protestant church. These changes were more visible in Germany where there were divisions in denominations. One thing they all shared was a history of animosity towards Judaism. The Jewish people had long been shunned for their part in the crucifixion of Christ and their refusal to convert to Christianity during the medieval period as well as Reformation under German theologian Martin Luther. Before Luther's death he appeared to have grown very bitter toward the Jews for their persistence in holding to their beliefs and not converting to Christianity.

Alas, it cannot be anything but the terrible wrath of God which permits anyone to sink into such abysmal, devilish, hellish, insane baseness, envy, and arrogance. If I were to avenge myself on the devil himself I should be unable to wish him such evil and misfortune as God's wrath inflicts on the Jews, compelling them to lie and to blaspheme so monstrously, in violation of their own conscience. Anyway, they have their reward for constantly giving God the lie (Anti-Semitism: Martin Luther - "The Jews & Their Lies, 1543).

Some European churches had put this behind them, but in Germany it appears that it was still a source of antagonism. Some Protestants did support the emancipation of the Jews politically hoping they would convert to Christianity. This was also a sign of liberal progression in Western Europe. Many of the Protestants began to move away from Luther's views on the Jews hoping for Jewish conversion and church membership. Instead, they looked to prominent scholars of the time, for example, Adolf von Harnack to confirm Christianity's new covenantal relationship of the New Testament in exchange for the old covenantal relationship of the Jews from the Torah

(Conway, 2001:494). Assimilation of the Jews into the church did not take place as was expected and Protestants began to develop negative views on Judaism. Leading scholars such as Heinrich von Treitschke and Adolf Stoecker lamented the church's failure to convert many of the Jews. Israel was viewed as the forerunner to modern Christianity (Conway, 2001:496).

Many were willing to submit to authoritarian leadership if it led to positive economic change and a rise in Germany's strength. This resulted in strong anti-Semitism due to the views of the new chancellor for racial pride. Opposition was stymied with propaganda by leading Nazi official Joseph Goebbels's focus on racial pride and his negative view of non-Aryan people. Germanic pride was found in the Aryan race according to Hitler and his supporters. As far as the church was concerned, Hitler looked to scholars Paul Althaus, Emmanuel Hirsch and Wilhelm Staple for theological support to oppose the Jews (Conway, 2001:496). The Protestant Church never provided a strong argument in defence of the Jews. The church was not prepared to respond to the anti-Semitic views of the Nazis. These scholars took the lead in promoting nationalism and racist theology that opposed the Jews. There was no opposition to the measures that were to come as part of the Nazi ideology.

In 1933, the first anti-Jewish measures were established. Protestant leaders were not resistant to the measures since they did not want to oppose the Nazi regime. Nationalism provided the hope the Germans were seeking. Leading Protestants did not want to appear disloyal to the new government. In fact, there was a group of loyal Protestants that called themselves the Deutsche Christian (German Christians) who supported the national revival of the Nazis (Conway, 2001:496). The German Christians sought reform within the church and wanted Jewish-born leaders removed from their positions. In addition to removing those who were Jewish born, they sought to remove parts of the Old Testament due to its Jewish influence. Jesus was initially portrayed as a "heroic Aryan" (Conway, 2001:496). They gained support for their advancement of Nazi ideology from Professors Adolf Schlatter and Gerhard Kittel. Their efforts resulted in the formation of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence in German Church Life (Conway: 496). Its goal was a church free of any Jewish influence.

The Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence in German Church Life confronted with opposition from a more conservative element of the Protestant church. As previously mentioned, in 1933, Martin Niemöller formed the Pastor's Emergency League. They were against the removal of Jewish converts from the church. A year later the PEL became the foundation for the Confessing Church. The Confessing Church strongly opposed the measures and restrictions placed on the church and the converted Jews. They saw their position as

defending the churches' position in view of the Nazi policies and restrictions placed on it. The focus of the Confessing Church was also to protect the autonomy of the church against an institutional government-managed church. Unfortunately, the treatment of the Jews and the humanitarian efforts appeared to be less important to the Confessing Churches. It is interesting that even when they were oppressed by the SS, they remained loyal to the idea of a nationalistic revival. Leaders Martin Niemöller and Otto Dibelius retained the traditional views against the unconverted Jews, which was anti-Semitic (Conway, 2001:496). "I have always considered myself an anti-Semite. One cannot ignore that Jewry has played a leading role in all the destructive manifestations of modern civilization (Gerlach, 2001:42).

They were unified on what it meant to be a Christian but were concerned about the interference of the state in matters of faith (Cochrane, 1976: 201-203). They believed those converted from Judaism were viewed as equally as those born into Protestantism. This is where the churches' responsibility can be questioned. Ethically and theologically, should the Confessing Church have treated the converted Jews any differently? More research needs to be done to prevent future attempts at genocide and oppression against any race, culture, or ethnic group (Conway, 2001:496). Prejudice against Judaism was not uncommon in Germany even in the pre-Nazi years. Throughout much of history there has been a hatred for the Jews by the Germans. Conway captures this sentiment:

Even in the Confessing Church, which early on recognized the threat of Nazi totalitarian ambitions, there was a consistent hesitation to challenge Nazi ideology on the central points of its anti-Semitic program. Only a few Protestant theologians, exemplified by Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in opposing the attempt of the Deutsche Christen to claim a purely Germanic nature for the church, stressed the Jewish origins of Christianity, maintained the vitality of both the Old and New Testament revelations, and acknowledged their debt to Judaism (Conway: 496-497).

These views were not shared among all the Confessing Christians. The result was little or no support for the Jewish community within the church. The injustice and abuse of governmental authority received little opposition as a result. Only the Jehovah's Witnesses retained their connection to the roots in Judaism, and this resulted in their own oppression by the Nazis.

The history of Germanic anti-Semitic views was hardly enough reason for the genocide and oppression of the Jews. It is unfortunate that this history of persecution would be enough to suppress opposition from the Protestant Church as a whole. It was not even enough to cause the division of the Protestant church. Only the loss of autonomy and persecution of converted Jews would lead to any serious resistance. Sadly, based on their historical understanding of the

Jews, many Germans became bystanders and tolerated the injustices. The persecutions continued without any real opposition, and it did not appear as if there would be any. The church feared persecution itself. Neither theology nor humanitarian efforts became a major part of the resistance. Resistance was confined to small pockets of people, many from neighbouring countries (Evans, 2005: 223-227).

Even though there was little resistance, especially from the Protestant Church, the methods used to eradicate the Jews were not supported. Even with disagreement over the methods used to eradicate the Jews, the Protestant church failed to act. This can be seen in the following statement by Conway.

This ambivalence could be seen as the anti-Jewish persecutions became more striking. Following the notorious November 1938 pogrom (Kristallnacht), Protestants shared widespread public revulsion against Nazi's acts of violence and vandalism. Yet no protest was raised by any of the church leaders. Spontaneous acts of charity, or the dangerous and heroic efforts of individuals to give refuge and shelter to the threatened Jews, were isolated examples of sympathy that made the silence of the church more shameful (2001:497).

The other churches in Europe and America expressed concern about the lack of opposition from 1933 through to the end of the war. Other church leaders in other countries believed the Confessing Church was heavily engaged in the protest of political matters, but this was not the case. Again, there were isolated cases, but never *en masse*. In April 1933, Dutch, British, and American church leaders protested the Nazi measures that were discriminatory (Conway, 2001:497). There was a real concern that the involvement in these outside churches would only encourage more persecution. It appears that every angle that was taken by any church leadership only resulted in frustration. There just was no real opposition. Why? With most of the German population being confessing Christians, why did more people not come together to take a stand against the Nazis? Even with support from the outside countries, there was no real rallying point for the Confessing Church and no real rallying point from the German Christians, mainly because they embraced the nationalistic ideology.

The Nazi rise to power in Germany was greeted by most Christians in Germany with optimism. They welcomed the new regime and particularly embraced its nationalism, and both the Catholic and Protestant churches there pursued a course of compromise and accommodation with the regime, particularly when conflicts arose over Nazi state interference with church programs. Among European ecumenical leaders, there were worries about the possible anti-Christian repercussions of a fascist ideology and fears of renewed German militarism under Nazism. In 1933 most European and US Christian leaders, however, took a "wait and see" attitude. United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum, 2020. (<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-german-churches-and-the-nazi-state>). [Access on 27/03/20].

This quote captures the essence of the Protestant church from inside Germany to outside Germany. The lapse of timing while waiting would prove to be a detriment to German society and the victims of the atrocities committed.

The night referred to as Kristallnacht of 1938 finally convinced church leaders that Nazi ideology was not compatible with their theology and moral teachings. Anti-Semitism was not consistent with Protestant teachings. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's grandmother (possibly where Bonhoeffer got his active resistant attitude from), refused to participate in the boycott and confidently walked into Jewish businesses (Metaxas, 2011). Unfortunately, she was in the minority and many avoided the threat of the SS by boycotting the Jews. The event referred to was Kristallnacht or The Crystal Night, or The Night of Broken Glass. On November 9 and 10, 1938 throughout Germany and Austria, there were a series of riots that took place against the Jews where their businesses and synagogues were vandalized, and the Jews were persecuted. This was supposedly in response to the alleged assassination of the secretary of the third German Embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath. This was allegedly done by a seventeen-year-old Jew Herschel Grynszpan (Yahil, 1990:836). Little was done in defence of the Jews due to the lack of organization. Some attempts were made to assist in relocating converted Jews, but it was to no avail.

The outbreak of war in 1939 proved that many Germans were more supportive of national pride than a Protestant effort to thwart the persecution of the Jews. Most Protestants were consumed with the early victories of war than the Christian faith. The persecution of the Jews grew during the war and was explained as the consequences of war. "The majority turned a blind eye on events, retreated into apathetic indifference, and even adopted a measure of sympathetic acquiescence" (Conway, 2001:497). This further supports the idea that many of the Protestants including the Confessing Church fell into bystander classifications. The persecution of the Jews only increased in the following years. Any attempt to stop the persecution was deemed improbable by the church (Barnett, 1992).

In 1941, the church initially believed that the persecution of the Jews was a consequence of war (Conway, 2001). The Jews were being transported to unknown locations in the east. As circumstances became worse for the Jews, it was apparent to the Protestant Church that this was not solely due to the war. The Deutsche Christen explained that anti-Semitism and support of Hitler was warranted to avoid a "Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy" (498). Bolshevism is defined in

the following terms: “the term is synonymous with Soviet Communism and refers to the dictatorship established by Lenin in Russia in 1917” (Fischel & Ortman, 2004:305). The news of mass murder began to circulate and caught the attention of some of the Protestant population.

In 1933 Bishop Theophil Wurm of Wittenberg made himself the spokesman for this feeling of outrage and wrote a series of letters to Nazi leaders in protest against measures that contradicted the God-given right to human to human existence and dignity. But in order to avoid the charge of defeatism, or the possible exploitation of any public protest by enemy countries, these letters were not published (Conway, 2001:498).

It is obvious from the records that the church, especially the German Christians remained faithful to Nazi ideology. Those who did oppose it such as the remainder of the Confessing Church had difficulty relaying the message and concern about Jewish abuses. Many of the outspoken Confessing Church members like Niemöller still remained imprisoned during most of this time, which certainly limited their effectiveness in protesting any Nazi measures against the Jews. “Not until the end of 1943 did the Prussian Synod of the Confessing Church address a letter to all its congregants, setting out its opposition to state-organized mass murder as contravening the Fifth Commandment” (Conway: 498). These protests had a minimal impact. Many of the German Protestants were either ignorant of what was going on or they simply refused to go against the state.

Most if not all the resistance had little or no impact on the “Final Solution.” Even after the Allies made the German people aware of the mass atrocities, there appeared to be a denial of the heinousness of the crimes the Nazis had committed against the Jews. This was true even after viewing the concentration camps. Many, including Christians, expressed disbelief. Protestant theologians had no idea of the impact this would have on the Christian faith. The indifference that previously had been shown was now realized as a horrific mistake. As one author comments on the Confessing Church’s response:

In October 1945, when the surviving leaders of the Confessing Church issued the famous Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, in which they admitted their lack of faithful resistance to the evils of Nazism and called for repentance and a new beginning, no specific reference was made of the fate of the Jews. The failure to take a stronger stand on behalf of the Jewish people became the basis of self-accusation among German Protestants in subsequent years and led to new, if belated, attempts to reconsider the fateful relations between Christians and Jews (Conway, 2001:498).

The German Protestants were even divided over the guilt that had been assumed. Many refused to acknowledge that anti-Semitism itself was wrong, but Niemöller would be one of the

Confessing Christians who bore the guilt of the atrocities. Others felt that national pride was still at stake and they refused a confession of guilt on part of the German Protestants.

3.5.1 Pastor's Emergency League Transition

The PEL was short-lived - it seemed due to the aggressive move of the Nazis to move toward a Reich church system. Originally it was to combat the early measures of Hitler's ideology. The pastors were losing their autonomy to the Reich. A state-controlled church proved to be disastrous to the institution of the church and the ability to lead the churches in a biblical manner. Most of this study focuses on the Confessing Church and their response to the Holocaust. The Confessing Church became the primary resistance within the German Protestant Church. With leaders such as Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Confessing Church had the promise of a major resistance movement. Unfortunately, the Nazi measures restricted the ability of the Confessing Church. Niemöller would eventually be imprisoned and Bonhoeffer was conflicted over his convictions and the Nazi anti-Christian ideology.

Once it became clear that the Nazi government intended to exercise strict control over all German Churches, the Confessing Church mounted opposition to Hitler's aim to interfere with Christian theology and rites. Though these Christians fought Nazi attempts to expel converts from the congregations, they remained mostly silent about the persecution of the Jews (Fischel and Ortmann, 2004:306-307).

3.6 Confessing Church split

It was only a matter of time before the Confessing Church would be split by attrition. Niemöller spent most of the years 1937-1945 in prison. At one point he talked about entering the military again and was denied (Schmidt, 1959). Then he was rumoured to be considering conversion to Catholicism. Karl Barth was removed from his teaching position in Germany and went to Switzerland to continue teaching and doing his theological work. Bonhoeffer was moving around from the United States, London and Germany during these years. Later he became more aggressive to get rid of Hitler through an assassination attempt that went wrong. Many of the other Confessing Church leaders simply gave up and submitted to the Reich and were satisfied to stay away from persecution.

Obviously during this time when all the Confessing Church leaders were divided, the Confessing Church lost what little influence it had. Pastors were threatened with imprisonment and placed under surveillance. A gag order was instituted to restrict preaching against the Reich and Hitler. By the end of 1937, over 700 pastors had been arrested for some violation or alleged abuse of

the news measures placed on the church. It was difficult for the Confessing Church to have influence when the leadership was in prison. One can only imagine how difficult it had become once they were divided in so many places (Evans, 2005:230).

3.7 Summary

The condition of the Protestant church during these years is one of division. The German Protestants were being influenced from many different areas: the Reich, nationalistic pride, and biblical ethics. The state desired to control the churches and change them into more of a non-denominational church that more reflected the ideology of the Reich ideology; one that embraced racial purity and Nordic influence which resulted in the idea of the Positive Christianity. As a result, the church was divided into the German Christians, who started as The Pastor's Emergency League, and finally grew into the Confessing Church. Eventually, the Confessing Church came to show some regret to the response it had against the Nazis with the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt. Primarily Niemöller and several remaining pastors who were left in the Confessing Church signed the Stuttgart Confession recognizing that they had not exhausted every effort to stop the racial cleansing by the Nazis (Hockenos, 2004:187).

This is a pretty good summation of the period by Bonhoeffer's best friend Eberhard Bethge:

The period of German church struggles was as follows: 1. 1933-1935. The struggle was understood solely as a church struggle, with opportunity for nonconformist. 2. 1935-1938. The church struggle became unwanted political struggle; pressure being exerted toward disobedience. 3. 1938-1945. The church struggle disintegrated as a mismanaged political struggle; the alternatives became secret resistance or truce. 4. After 1945; Reinterpretation followed, half of it toward church struggle, half toward resistance, accompanied by confusion of interpretation as either a light for obedience in Christ or a fight for freedom of humankind (Bethge, 2000:45).

The church struggle was real and unresolved throughout the Holocaust. A question that continues to be asked is, "If the churches had held to biblical standards for response, could these atrocities have been thwarted?" At least some in the Confessing Church felt that they could have done more.

In the next chapter, the Nuremberg Laws will be defined and considered for their influence in the church. These were the citizenship laws that defined who was a true German or of Aryan blood. These laws also included what became known as the Aryan Paragraph which made the distinction between who was a Jew and who was of Aryan blood. It was in these laws that the Confessing Church would begin their divide from the rest of the Protestant churches. In these

laws, the converted Jews were no longer looked at based on religion but on heritage and family bloodlines (Bergen, 2000:51). This legislation is what made the Holocaust possible. The next chapter will reveal the intentional shift to a strong dictatorship and a vicious and unremitting totalitarian government.

CHAPTER 4 ANTI-JEWISH LEGISLATION

4.1 Laws restricting the Jews

During the Nazi years, more than 2,000 anti-Jewish laws were enacted. One of the driving forces behind the formation of the Nazi party was a hatred of all things Jewish, consequently resulting in the legislative push against the Jews. There were four goals they hoped to accomplish with this legislation: they did not want Jews to be citizens; the Jews should not be public officials; they should be forbidden to immigrate to Germany; and Jewish publishers should be removed from their positions (Rozett & Spector, 2000:11).

The Nazis took control of Germany in early 1933 and remained in power until their defeat in 1945, when the allied forces invaded Germany. During the Nazi reign of terror, there were three different anti-Jewish laws enacted. The first was the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service passed in 1933 (March), which allowed the firing of non-Aryan employees from government positions. It will be discussed in further detail in the following paragraphs along the other two acts of legislation. It set a precedent for other anti-Semitic legislation. The second piece of legislation came in September of 1935 which was called the Nuremberg Laws. The Nuremberg Laws consisted of two laws passed by the German Parliament at an annual Nazi rally in Nuremberg. The Jews were “stripped of their citizenship and denied the right to vote” (Rozett & Spector, 2000:111). In the next three months, 13 additional alterations were attached to this law. This second law was designed to protect German blood and German honour. This law attempted to define Aryan, although the definition was a bit unclear. The Nuremberg Laws restricted Jewish economic advancement. The Germans began enforcing them in 1936. These laws restricted any advancement the Jews would have in society as well as set the precedent for the Holocaust and genocide of the German Jews.

4.2 The Enabling Act

In 1933 March, Hitler introduced legislation that ultimately gave him dictatorship of Germany. The introduction of the Enabling Act was the beginning of a totalitarian regime. This law “placed the instruments of power directly in the hands of the chancellor and the National Socialists’ minister of the interior and did not link the state of emergency to the authority of the president” (Benz, 2006: 25). With this law in place, Hitler could bypass all other checks and balances in government. “The Enabling Act was intended to suspend parliament and all other constitutional checks and balances of the government and establish a dictatorship, initially for a period of four years” (Benz, 2006: 26).

Hitler sought to remove any communist, socialist and Catholic opposition. He used legislation to accomplish this. Hitler had great influence over the previous elections. His goal was to remove the communists from the any part in the elections. Again, he used violence to accomplish this. The Reichstag, which was the headquarters for the government, was burned. Hitler had been suspected of initiating this arson, but he put the ultimate blame on the Communists. Even with the communists removed from the ballot, the Nazis were unable to secure the elections. Hitler then enacted a “Law for Removing the Distress of People and Reich” which became known as “The Enabling Act” which helped the Nazi Party to have governmental control (Bauer, 2001; 102). This law had many implications. For this study, the focus will remain on the implications for the anti-Jewish measures that ultimately invoked a response from the state church, the German Christians, and the Confessing Church. This law gave Hitler the dictatorship he was hoping to achieve. In the spring of 1933, he used force to eliminate all opposition from political parties. The Nazis used force to intimidate their rivals; if they were unable to accomplish their agenda through non-violent means, they simply used force to accomplish their goals (Bauer: 102). On 14 July 1933, a law was established that declared the Nazi party (NSDAP) the sole governing party. This ushered in the Führer, Adolf Hitler, as the supreme leader.

After President Hindenburg’s death on 3 August 1934, there was no longer any opposition to Hitler; he began to establish more effective control. This included purging the well-known Storm Troops or the SA, and establishing the SS (Schutzstaffel, the Defence Corps) to forcefully accomplish his agenda. Over 30 assassinations took place to remove any obstacles Hitler saw potential in to oppose the Nazi Regime (103). He sought to purify the Germanic people by getting rid of what was considered impure race and blood (Bauer, 2001:102-103). The Enabling Act gave him the authority he needed to establish any legislation that would help him accomplish this. This initial phase of Hitler’s plan was not that concerning to the Protestant churches. In fact, it appears that many supported the government takeover in some respects at this point.

4.3 The Aryan Paragraph

The Aryan Paragraph was a precursor to the Nuremberg Laws. In 1933, Hitler began setting the stage for his racial and citizenship purity ideology and worldview. Once he became chancellor, he wasted no time in utilizing his position to enact his worldview through legislation and laid the groundwork for further legislation that would ultimately give him power to decide who was considered of German blood and race.

Once the Nazi regime had consolidated its power in Germany, in an attempt to purge the German churches of all influence, it issued the Aryan Paragraph which held that 'no priests could be of Jewish extraction and no non-Jew could marry a Jewish woman.' The German churches took issue with the decree because they believed the government was challenging Christian theology by denying the efficacy of baptism (Fischel & Ortmann, 2004:304).

Understanding the anti-Jewish legislation of the Nazis is paramount to grasping the dilemma the church and more specifically, the Confessing Church had in responding to the Holocaust. The influence of Hitler on race and blood became a controversial issue that divided the Confessing Church. The German Christians and the Confessing Church had looked to baptism as an identifying factor prior to the legislation. After the legislation, the churches struggled with how it would be implemented in the churches. Specifically, it would alter who served in positions of leadership within the church. Martin Niemöller wrestled with departing from traditional state support from the church. Niemöller told cellmate Leo Stein about his thoughts about Hitler's approach.

I find myself wondering about that too. I wonder about it as much as I regret it. Still, it is true that Hitler betrayed me. I had an audience with him, as a representative of the Protestant Church, shortly before he became Chancellor, in 1932. Hitler promised me on his word of honor, to protect the Church, and not to issue any anti-Church laws. He also agreed not to allow pogroms against the Jews, assuring me as follows: "There will be restrictions against the Jews, but there will be no ghettos, no pogroms, in Germany."

I really believed, given the widespread anti-Semitism in Germany, at that time—that Jews should avoid aspiring to Government positions or seats in the Reichstag. There were many Jews, especially among the Zionists, who took a similar stand. Hitler's assurance satisfied me at the time. On the other hand, I hated the growing atheistic movement, which was fostered and promoted by the Social Democrats and the Communists. Their hostility toward the Church made me pin my hopes on Hitler for a while.

I am paying for that mistake now; and not me alone, but thousands of other persons like me (Leo Stein, 1941: *The National Jewish Monthly*, pp. 284–5, 301–2).

The laws forced the church to take a position on the converted Jews who had become members of the Protestant church. Only Dietrich Bonhoeffer took a clear stance on those who converted from Judaism to Christianity. The Aryan Paragraph was a major impetus for this struggle within the churches. One publication explains the Aryan Paragraph in this way:

(Aryan Paragraph), a type of regulation that blocked "non-Aryans" (Jews) from becoming members in German economic establishments, political parties, social clubs, volunteer organizations, student groups, sports groups, and other institutions. Regulations of this kind made their first appearance in Germany

during the nineteenth century. They were included in the constitutions of racist and nationalist student associations, political groups, and social organizations, and were used to exclude Jews from their ranks. After the Nazi rise to national power in January 1933, the Aryan Paragraph was used as a legal steppingstone to increased persecution. In April 1933 it was included in a group of laws that permitted the removal of Jews from various aspects of German society, such as the government, professional groups, universities and other places of academic learning. When the racial Nuremberg laws were passed in September 1935, the Aryan Paragraph became a basic fundamental of German law (Rozett and Spector, 2000:119).

The law addressing the Aryan Heritage was established 7 April 1933. It was labelled as the Law for the Re-establishment of the Professional Civil Service. It was the first of its kind to solidify German heritage. The law forced those of non-Aryan decent to retire from service. It removed Jews from positions of civil service. In addition to removing the Jews from civil service, it also identified and restricted those who were in opposition to the Nazi Regime from civil service. Some exceptions were made for those who served in World War I. The first three articles deal primarily with the Jews. The law states as follows:

The Reich government has enacted the following law, which is hereby proclaimed:

Article 1

1. For the reestablishment of a national professional civil service and for the simplification of administration, officials may be discharged from office according to the following regulations, even when the necessary conditions according to the appropriate law do not exist.
2. Officials, as used in this law, means immediate [unmittelbare] and mediate [mittelbare] officials of the Reich, immediate and mediate officials of the federal states [Laender], officials of communes [Gemeinde] and communal associations, officials of public legal corporations as well as institutions and undertakings placed upon the same status as these public legal corporations (Third decree of the Reichspräsident for the safeguarding of business and finance of 6 October 1931 -- RGB1. I P. 537, 3rd part, Chapter V, Section I, Art. 15, subparagraph 1). The stipulations apply also to employees of agencies supplying social insurance, who have the rights and duties of officials.
3. Officials as used in this law also includes officials in temporary retirement.
4. The Reichsbank and the German State Railway Co. are empowered to make corresponding regulations.

Article 2

1. Officials who since 9 November 1918 have attained the status of officials without possessing the required or usual preparation or other qualifications are to be dismissed from service. Their former salaries will be accorded them for a period of 3 months after their dismissal.
2. A right to waiting allowances, pensions, or survivor's pension and to the continuance of the official designation, the title, the official uniform and the official insignia is not possessed by them.
3. In case of need a pension, revocable at any time, equivalent to a third of the usual base Pay of the last position held by them may be granted them, especially when they are caring for dependent relatives; reinsurance according to the provisions of the Reich's social insurance law will not take place.
4. The stipulations of Section 2 and 3 will receive corresponding application in the case of persons of the type designated in Sec. 1, who already before this law became effective had been retired.

Article 3

1. Officials, who are of non-Aryan descent, are to be retired; insofar as honorary officials are concerned, they are to be removed from official status.
2. Section 1 is not in effect for officials who were already officials since 1 August 1914, or who fought during the World War at the front for the German Reich or who fought for its allies or whose fathers or sons were killed in the World War. The Reichsminister of the Interior can permit further exceptions in understanding with the appropriate special minister or the highest authorities of the federal states in the case of officials abroad. (<https://www.vaholocaust.org:5/17/18> access)

This legislation was the spark that fuelled the Pastors' Emergency League and then ultimately The Confessing Church. This law not only removed Jews from positions in the German Church but also restricted those of differing political views from the Nazis from serving in any civil service position. This law also served to force those civil servants to immediate retirement (Benz, 2006:30).

The main concern for Niemöller and the Confessing Church was that baptism was to no avail for those who had converted from Judaism. The biggest question by the Aryan Paragraph and the future Nuremberg Laws was, 'Who is a Jew?' According to the initial legislation:

Anyone with non-Aryan grandparents was non-Aryan. But a lot of good Germans had quarter-Jewish or half-Jewish kin; 45 percent of the marriage vows taken by Jews in 1932 had been to non-Jews; the figure had risen to 55 percent.

Hundreds of thousands of people fell under the broad definition (Dwork & Jan van Pelt, 2002:88).

4.4 The Nuremberg Laws

There were two primary influences in Hitler's ideology. Doris Bergen refers to them as "race" and "space" (Bergen, 2009:36). The idea that German blood was superior to that of any other culture, especially the Jewish religion, was the race element of Hitler's ideology. The space element, which will not be covered in this study, was the geographical expansion of the German territory. The issue of space was of little or no concern to the Confessing Church. The issue of race was however of great concern to the Confessing Church. One might suggest that it was not the fact that Jews were of a different culture, even those who converted to Christianity, but that they were not born into Christian families that is the issue (Bergen: 72). It was not the practice of religion that was Hitler's main concern; it was that most Christians were identified by cultural characteristics of Anglo-European or Aryan descent. Some believed that Aryan referred exclusively to those who had blond hair, blue eyes, and muscular physiques. This exclusive view of Aryanism would eliminate Hitler and many other high-ranking Nazi officials. Bergen makes a strong case for the fact that religion played a major role in identifying one as Aryan. Specifically, Christianity was the foundation upon which the Aryan ideology was identified.

The Confessing Church argued that if a person had converted to Christianity, it did not matter what they were, they were no longer Jews but Christians (Bergen, 2000:50-51). The Nuremberg Laws and the Aryan Paragraph suggest otherwise. The Confessing Church's response will be the subject of another chapter. Here it is important to understand the precursors to the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust from a theological and Christian-ethical perspective. The response did not happen in a vacuum or without a series of events that led up to the resistance, however little it may have been.

4.4.1 Overview of Nuremberg Laws

The Nuremberg Laws were two constitutional laws that were passed at a Nazi rally in Nuremberg on September 15, 1935. They became the foundation for excluding the Jews from German society. The laws were passed in a special session that was held at the annual rally. This was the basis for anti-Jewish laws that would follow, including the "Final Solution."

The Reichstag called a specially convened session just for establishing these racist and anti-Jewish laws which were called The Reich Citizenship Law and The Law for Protection of

German Blood and Honour. These ultimately became the tools used to initiate the segregation of the Jews. The meeting at Nuremberg was the third annual party rally held by the Nazis.

During these rallies hundreds of thousands of party members and supporters turned out to hear Hitler's speeches. There were parades and military demonstrations used to impress the massive crowds. "The highlight of the rally was the first public demonstration of the Third Reich's new tanks and planes, products of the recent rearmament effort" (Fraenkel, 2001: 452). Hitler had continually been demonstrating his power after the Night of Long Knives, where the removal of SA leader Ernst Röhm and the death of President Paul von Hindenburg made it possible for Hitler to take total control as Führer of Germany. Hitler's success only enabled him to become even more prominent in moving forward with his ideological assault on the Jews.

To crown the achievements of the young Nazi regime he had the Reichstag promulgate new anti-Semitic legislation. On the night of Sunday, 15 September 1935, emancipation and civic equality ended for the Jews of Germany, and they became legal pariahs in the land of their birth (453).

The Reich established the citizenship law in 1935 at the Nuremberg Rally. Some provisions were made for those Jews who had served in the war before 1914. Terminology played a significant role in the interpretation of these laws. The terms *German Blood* and *Jewish Blood* replaced *Aryan* and *non-Aryan* (453).

The Reich Citizenship Law drew a distinction between two kinds of subjects of the state (*Staats-angehöriger*). Only those of German or related blood were entitled to be Reich citizens (*Reichsbürger*) with full political rights. Jews were considered more Reich subjects, devoid of the right to vote or to be elected to office. The acquisition of Reich citizenship was to be formally recognized by the granting of a Reich citizenship certificate, but in fact such certificates were never granted during the Third Reich (Fraenkel, 2001: 453).

The basis of these laws was ostensibly to protect the purity of German blood and was necessary for the continued existence of the German people (*Volk*). They strictly limited marriages between Germans and Jews or those of Jewish descent. Even maid servants under the age of 45 were restricted to further prevent the opportunity for sexual relations.

The Jews were forbidden to fly German flags to protect German honour. This was influenced by previous legislation that changed the colours of the flag to red, black, and white with the Swastika as the national emblem. Hermann Göring the president of the Reichstag said:

(The Swastika) symbolized the struggle for our own race, so did it become a symbol of our fight against the Jews as a race of destroyers. It is therefore self-evident that no Jew should be allowed to display this flag in the future when it flies over Germany (Fraenkel, 2001:453).

It was evident that every attempt was being made to exclude the Jews from any German heritage or any connection as racially connected to the German people. This led to a struggle between the Nazi faithful and the bureaucratic elements such as the Interior Minister Bernard Losener who sought a more balanced approach that distinguished between those who were partially Jewish and those who were considered fully Jewish (:453). Losener was also involved in the drafting and through his bureaucratic influence was able to see the balance prevail. During this time, it is estimated there were between 78,000-100,000 half-Jews in Germany and Austria (:453). Hitler proceeded to demand legislation that promoted his ideology of a Germany free of Jewry and the Nürnberg Laws provided the foundation for Hitler's view of Germany.

The vaguely formulated Reich Citizenship Law, in particular, was conveniently seized upon by the Nazi legal experts as an all-purpose peg on which to hang no less than 13 measures relating to the Jewish Sonderrecht, the special legal position of the Jews in Nazi Germany. The so-called Thirteenth Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law (it was in fact the 12th) was published on 25 April 1943, after the deportation of the German Jews to the ghettos and death camps in the East had already been completed. It declared that no Jew, Mischling of the first degree, or Gypsy could become a Reich subject-superfluous and anachronistic precaution considering the ongoing campaign of extermination (Fraenkel, 2001:454).

The power that Hitler had amassed overcame any attempt to sway his ideology of a pure German race and culture. This opened the door for an assault on the Jewish population that ultimately led to the Final Solution, the complete removal of the Jews from Germany and parts of Europe. Below is a copy of the legislation as it was written. It is a clear attack on the citizenship of all Jews and their participation in German society.

The Reichstag has adopted unanimously, the following law, which is herewith promulgated.

Article 1

1. A subject of the State is a person, who belongs to the protective union of the German Reich, and who, therefore, has particular obligations towards the Reich.
2. The status of the subject is acquired in accordance with the provisions of the Reich and State Law of Citizenship.

Article 2

1. A citizen of the Reich is only that subject, who is of German or kindred blood and who, through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve faithfully: the German people and Reich.

2. The right to citizenship is acquired by the granting of Reich citizenship papers.
3. Only the citizen of the Reich enjoys full political rights in accordance with the provision of the laws.

Article 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior in conjunction with the Deputy of the Fuehrer will issue the necessary legal and administrative decrees for the carrying out and supplementing of this law.

Nurnberg, 15 Sept 1935 at the Reichsparteitag of Liberty.

The Fuehrer and Reichs Chancellor Adolf Hitler.

The Reichs Minister of the Interior, Frick (Fraenkel, 2001).

4.5 Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass)

With the establishment of these anti-Semitic laws, a long reign of terror against the Jews began. The Enabling Act gave Hitler the power to declare the Citizenship Law and the Nuremberg Laws. Once those laws were passed there was a legitimate opportunity to oppress the Jews. The Nazis began to remove Jewish influence from every part of society. They were removed from civil positions, their businesses were protested, the role they played in society as doctors and lawyers was severely restricted, and the pogroms or riots against stores were violently protested. This ultimately led to what is referred to as the Night of Broken Glass (Kristallnacht). The storefronts of Jewish businesses were destroyed; businesses were essentially devastated as the Nazis called for protests against all the Jewish businesses.

The pogrom on November 9-10 in 1938 was an event unparalleled in Germany prior to the Holocaust. Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) was a result of the anti-Jewish measures put in place by the Nazis. This is not a popular phrase among many Germans, but this event is well-documented and is among the harsh measures taken prior to the "Final Solution" in pre-war years of Germany. This was a series of violent attacks that began on November 8 and continued through November 11. After the new laws had been enacted, Germany and its controlling areas had been segregated into Aryan and Non-Aryan as defined by the new legislation (Jonca, 2001:385). The name is associated with the glass of the shop windows that was broken in the Jewish storefronts. This was allegedly a response to an assassination in Paris on November 7 of an Embassy official from Germany, Ernst von Rath. Supposedly, a Jewish refugee named Herschel Grynszpan was accused of the assassination. As with the burning of the Reichstag earlier mentioned, it would not be beyond the realm of possibility that

the Nazis were responsible. It certainly was not beyond them to be guilty of the event and use the blame for oppression of others.

Although this terminology is hard to find in any official papers, it certainly became a reality for many Jews. The term *party pogrom* (Jonca, 2001:385) has been used to describe the events of 9-10 November 1938. This pogrom involved all facets of the Third Reich in addition to the National Police. Attacks on the Jews during this time were violent. The event involved arrests, detention in concentration camps, and removal of Jews from the economic life in Germany and surrounding areas such as Hannover and Danzig (385). This was the first wave of Aryanization attempts that stemmed from the laws on race and purity.

4.6 Summary of anti-Jewish legislation

One has no problem seeing the clear attempt at removing any form of Jewish religion, culture, and influence from German society. This ultimately led to the removal also of any baptized Jews from serving in the Christian churches. This sparked the fire that resulted in the Confessing Church and any Protestant resistance that took place. One can argue that the main concern for the church leaders like Niemöller was more about the converted Jews than the well-being of all Jews.

With the legislation in place, a wave of anti-Semitism began, and the Nazi ideology only grew stronger from this point until the end of the war in 1945. The resistance was not adequate to stop the onslaught of terror that would begin. This begs the question of whether the Protestant churches acted in accordance with their theological and Christian ethical responsibilities or whether they abdicated them. Further investigation of the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt reveals that Niemöller and a few others realized that more should have been done. The Confession of Guilt will be considered in the chapters that follow. This is a strong lesson for the future of church involvement in legislation and government practices that contradict biblical ethics. In response to the Nazi legislation against the Jews, the Confessing Church made their own statement about God's law. Unfortunately, the confessions did not go far enough in some areas. The mention of what was happening to the Jews was absent as well as the specific onslaught on the Nazis and Adolf Hitler.

CHAPTER 5 THE THEOLOGICAL DECLARATION OF BARMEN

5.1 The Theological Declaration of Barmen 1934 Context

The first Confessing Church Synod was held in Barmen. There were three hundred pastors and members in attendance. Karl Barth was the primary author of what became *The Theological Declaration of Barmen*. Barth was involved in a growing tension that existed between the Confessing Church and the German Christians. There were two meetings that resulted in the Barmen Declaration. The first was in January of 1934 and the final was in May of 1934. “The final document was the Barmen Declaration, which questioned the totalitarian claims on the church by the Nazis and heretical teachings of the German Christian movement” (Stroud, 2013:41). The Barmen was intended to make a definitive statement by The Confessing Church on the true identification of the German Evangelical Church.

The year 1934 proved to be full of activity for the Nazis and the Pastors’ Emergency League. The topics of dissention were the Aryan Paragraph, retention of the Old Testament in the church, and Christians of Jewish descent. These problems with the “Jewish Question” sparked a hot debate among the German Christians and the PEL. The PEL pledge specifically brought into question the implementation of the Aryan Paragraph. On January 4, 1934, Reich Bishop Ludwig Muller put into place the “Muzzle Decree” which attempted to silence the Confessional Church about the Aryan Paragraph (Gerlach, 2000:70-71). The Pastor’s Emergency League was not intimidated by this attempt to silence them.

The Reich Church had previously sent out a “questionnaire” for the churches to respond with a record of ancestry for the Jewish office-holders. Many in the Pastors’ Emergency League were perplexed on how to respond to the questionnaire. Martin Niemöller, leader of the PEL, encouraged the pastors to disregard the letter. Prior to this, the Aryan Paragraph and its implementation had been suspended. In response, the Reich Government reinstated the law.

Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Franz Hildebrandt led the way from the Pastors’ Emergency League in 1933 against the German Christians and the Reich Bishop Ludwig Muller. This opposition was largely due to the Nazification of the Protestant Church by the government. In the beginning there was opposition to the mistreatment of the Jews and their anti-Semitic views, but it soon became secondary to the Nazification of the church and the rise of National Socialism (Hockenos, 2018:96-98). Unfortunately, even Martin Niemöller, one of the eventual leaders of the Confessing Church, attempted to work with the National Socialists at times.

Conversely, at times he would be staunchly against the Nazis and the infiltration of the Protestant Church by them (Hockenos: 105).

The foundation for the Barmen came in January 1934. The first Confessional Synod (29-31 May 1934) was guided by Barth's writing of the confession. This confession rejected the German Christians and their ideology of combining state and church. This was a serious concern for the Confessing Church. In this confession Barth and the Confessing Church rejected the doctrine of the German Christians. Barth wrote about this in his "Theological Declaration" at the Dahlem Confessional Synod in October 1934 (Hockenos: 73).

It was established that blood and race did not determine the communion of those in the church; it was the Holy Spirit and baptism. In this same statement, Jewish Christians would not be treated differently. If in fact they were treated differently and blood and race determined communion in the church, it was no longer considered a church (73).

The Declaration of the Reformed Confessional Synod held in January at Barmen in 1934 did include Barth's remarks on the Aryan Paragraph. This was a precursor to the Theological Declaration of Barmen that was held in May of the same year. The Aryan Paragraph began to fade as other issues moved to the forefront of discussions for the Pastors' Emergency League. Barth's reputation as a theologian gained him acknowledgement for his lectures and writings. His influence made him the probable choice to pen the confessional statements that summarized the PEL's position against the German Christians and the Nazis.

Barth was a well-known reformed Swiss theologian. The Barmen came after a lecture given on January 4, the same day the Aryan Paragraph was re-instituted by the Reich Bishop. Barth delivered the "Confession of the Free Church Synod" lecture and several months later Barth's lecture became the foundation for the Declaration of Barmen. Here is an excerpt from that lecture:

As far as its message and its character are concerned, the church of Jesus Christ is one and the same in different times, race, peoples, states, and cultures. The right of ecclesiastical diversity stands or falls here upon the church's compatibility with the unity of its message and character. With that, the view is rejected; As though it were compatible with the unity of the message and character of the church to limit membership and aptitude for service to members of a certain race.

Unity. The accusation of humanitarian egalitarianism isn't accurate here. It won't do to see diversities {among peoples} as a special revelation from God. These diversities stand under the one message and are measured against the one standard. No form of the Aryan paragraph can be made compatible with it

(Delivered at Free Reformed Synod and published in Karl Immer (Wupperthal), 1934: 20-33).

This lecture did not appear in the Barmen word-for-word but was the ideological foundation for the thoughts developed in the document. As a representative of the Confessing Church, Barth sought to defend the Old Testament and develop a confession that was not based on race but faith. The Confessing Church would soon leave the fight over the Aryan Paragraph and struggle for its existence. The benefits of attacking the Aryan Paragraph seemed miniscule when comparing it to the fight to maintain a certain amount of autonomy within the church from the Nazis and the Third Reich. Gerlach states:

In its efforts to consolidate its strength and create a strong public image, the Confessing Church no longer attached such importance to attacking the Aryan Paragraph as a violation of the confession and a threat to the essence of the church. It had no desire to prolong or intensify the discussion on this point (2000:72).

The new pledge offered by the Pastors' Emergency League was vague on the question of the Aryan Paragraph and the pastors' stance on the Jewish Question. The new pledge was recorded as:

Volk and Fatherland, Blood and Race can be interpreted properly and recognized as God's gift and task only on the foundation of this Word of God. We reject the doctrine that see *Volkstum* and Race as the standards for the validity of biblical revelation. Membership in the church is not dependent upon Blood and *Volkstum*, but rather upon baptism and faith (Gerlach: 73).

This statement gave little concern for the non-Aryan Christians in the church. The focus became, "the church must become the church again" (Gerlach: 73). According to the PEL, the church must be founded on Scripture and the Reformation confession. This was the goal of Karl Barth and the PEL leaders entering the Barmen Synod.

5.2 The Confessing Church at Barmen

One of the major steps in the formation of the Confessing Church was the creation of the Theological Declaration of Barmen (Hockenos, 2018: 110). The synod was held at Barmen from May 29 to 31, 1934. The precursor to the Barmen came in January of the same year. The "Council of Brethren" appointed the theological arm of the Confessing Church that would draft the Barmen: Karl Barth, Hans Asmussen, and Thomas Breit (Cochrane, 1962:142). It was Karl Barth that the other leaders of the Confessing Church looked to for doctrinal guidance. The document had historical significance for the Confessing Church. Born out of the German Church

struggle, the Barmen was the biblical response of the Confessing Church to the German Christians and the Reich Bishop. The creation of the Barmen solidified the position of the Confessing Church as the one true Evangelical Church in Germany.

In the Barmen Declaration there was a high value placed on preaching the Bible as God's Word. There were obvious tensions between the elected Reich Bishop, Ludwig Muller, and those who would become the Confessing Church. The conflict grew throughout Hitler's rise to power. The conflict also involved a segment of the Protestant church that was to be identified as the German Christians. This was the segment of the Protestant church that supported Hitler and the measures he took to rid Germany of Jewish influence and replace it with a pure Germanic or Aryan influence. The Aryan paragraph, which called for the restriction of all non-Aryans in governmental and church affairs, was a source of contention for many of the Protestant pastors. This greatly affected the Jewish Christians serving in the church.

Barth wrote the six theses that became the Barmen. It was considered "a masterpiece of clarity and concision" of the Confessing Church's response to the events of the German church struggle (Hockenos, 2018:110). The response as it was read was nothing short of miraculous for the Confessing Church given all the obstacles that were overcome for its creation. Hockenos writes:

The first thesis set the tone for the whole declaration. 'Jesus Christ, as he is witnessed to in the Holy Scriptures, is the one Word of God that we are to hear and in whom we are to trust and obey in living and dying. We reject the false teaching [of the German Christians] as if the church could and must recognize as the source of her proclamation other events and powers, figures and truths as God's revelation.' National Socialism made clear, had no place in the church's proclamation (2018: 110).

The significance of this document is unquestionable for the Confessing Church. This document gave the confessional, theological, and ethical foundation for the church and the delegates at the synod sensed it. It suffices to record the response of the delegates as it was read at the synod: "When the delegates heard Barth's declaration read aloud, they rose to their feet and sang the hymn *All Praise and Thanks to God*" (110).

5.2.1 Drafting the Barmen

The Synod of Barmen was in part a response to the German Christian Braune Synod held in Saxony in 1933. The German Christians attempted to have a theological justification for Hitler's National Socialist movement. The National Socialist movement presented the idea or image of a

new Christ that was more in line with the German people and the idea of a people's state was a major tenet of true religion or true Christianity (Spiceland, 2006:141). The Confessing Church's opposition to this idea was the foundation for the Synod at Barmen and resulted in the Barmen Declaration. The Barmen Confession contains six paragraphs that denounce the fact that the church and Christian doctrine were subordinate to a political or social movement (Spiceland). The Barmen stresses sole dependence upon Christ as the living word of God, not the state or the church. It places a high priority on the scriptures. The Barmen focused on the autonomy of the church separated from that of the state. Accordingly, there was no divine revelation disjointed from Christ. The Barmen was embraced by the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

The church conflict that resulted in a split with the German Christians and the Confessing Church was a contributory factor in the events that led up to the Barmen. The battle over the position of Reich Bishop and the implementation of anti-Jewish laws within the church prompted a response from the Confessing Church. The call for the abolition of the Old Testament and certain parts of the New Testament that were influenced by Judaism was in direct opposition to Bible (Cochrane, 1963:106-113). Those of non-German origin were forced to retire from church offices and a heavy influence of Nationalism replaced doctrinal precedence within the church.

The Barmen never explicitly states the principle that non-Aryan Christians would comprise the Body of Christ. Gerlach suggests that the ideal place for a statement of this sort would fit well in the third thesis which states: But let us be righteous in love and grow in every respect to Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the entire body is joined together (Eph. 4:15-16):

The Christian congregation is the congregation of brethren, in which Jesus Christ acts in the present as Lord in the Word and the Sacrament through the Holy Spirit. With its faith as well as through obedience, in its message as well as through its order, it must witness in the midst of the world of sin as the church of the blessed sinners to the fact that it alone is His property, that it lives and desires to live alone from His comfort and from His direction, in expectation of His appearance. We reject the false doctrine that the church may be permitted to abandon the form of its message and its order at its discretion, or in response to the fluctuation of prevailing ideological and political convictions (Gerlach, 2000:73).

It does in fact seem like a fitting place for a statement in support of the Jewish Christians being viewed equally as the Body of Christ based on confession and baptism.

Among the Confessing Church theologians was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, an understudy of Barth. Bonhoeffer was in London at the time of the synod at Barmen. This may have caused the Barmen Declaration to be an easier process for Barth. The two friends probably viewed the

Declaration from differing perspectives. Barth was known for his neo-orthodoxy and reformed theology. He was highly respected in the field and this is one of the main reasons he became the main draftsman of the Theological Declaration at Barmen. The Swiss theologian was the theologian of the Confessing Church. Bonhoeffer on the other hand was its ethicist or the ethical element. Barth later became well known for his work, *Church Dogmatics* among other theological works. Bonhoeffer offered many writings such as *Life Together*, *The Cost of Discipleship*, and a compilation of uncompleted essays on ethics. Ethics may have been one of Bonhoeffer's favourite subjects. Before he was arrested for his work in the plot to assassinate Hitler (Valkyrie), he had hoped to complete his work. Most of what Bonhoeffer wrote on the subject came from his *Letters from Prison* collection. One can only marvel at what could have been if Bonhoeffer's life had it not been shortened by his execution. The Confessing Church had a balance between the two that offered scholarly guidance as well as passionate ethics or the right behaviour in the face of tyranny. While many in the Confessing Church drifted away from the concern of the treatment of the Jews and focused more on the infiltration of the German Christians on the Protestant church, Bonhoeffer never rested on the mistreatment of people like the Jews. Bonhoeffer's time in New York taught him the value of supporting and worshipping with the minorities.

Was a balance of theological and ethical consideration possible in the Confessing Church or in the Theological Declaration of Barmen? The Declaration itself seems to suggest there was. In the section that follows there is a statement of balance:

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions" (Barmen Synod).

Reich Bishop Muller began a process of removing the Jewish influence in the church. One of the concerns on the part of The Pastor's Emergency League was the removal of the Old Testament passages from the liturgy of the German Church. The German Christians supported these measures in allegiance with the new regime. The Aryan Paragraph called for the removal of any Jewish leadership in the church. Wolfgang Gerlach comments on the conflict by writing:

It was an unmistakable sign that the last half of the Pastor's Emergency League pledge (which explicitly opposed the Aryan paragraph and promised "shared responsibility... with those persecuted") had been sacrificed to a stronger emphasis on the first half (which promised to defend the ministry and its confessional position). This shift was not necessarily linked to the Law to Restore Order in the German Protestant Church. (The so-called Muzzle Law of 4 January 1934). This decree permitted a quick resolution to the Aryan question, which led

to Reich Bishop Muller to reintroduce the church Aryan paragraph the same day (Gerlach, 2000:71).

The Muzzle Law was an attempt to silence the pastors who were opposed to the new measures being instituted by the Reich Bishop. This was the context that the Declaration of Barmen was penned under. Martin Niemöller was one of the pastors not intimidated by the attempt to silence the Pastors' Emergency League. He went as far as to suggest that the Jewish office holders should oppose the attempt to remove them from their positions in the church. A questionnaire had been distributed by the Reich Bishop expecting church officials to show proof of Aryan ancestry for those serving in positions of leadership within the church. On 2 November 1933, Niemöller encouraged those in the Pastors' Emergency League to not respond to the questionnaire.

5.3 The Theological Declaration of Barmen

Here is a condensed version of the Theological Declaration of Barmen. This translation by Matthew D. Hockenos is a combination of Arthur Cochrane's version and Douglas S. Bax's translation (2004:179-180). The full Barmen Theses will be placed in the Appendix.

1. "I am the Way the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold through the door but climbs in somewhere else, he is a thief and a robber...I am the Door; If anyone enters through me, he will be saved (John 10: 1, 9) Jesus, as He attested to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear, and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine that the church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures, and truths as God's revelation.
2. "Jesus Christ has been made wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption for us by God" (1 Corinthians 1, 30). As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, and with equal seriousness, he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for free, grateful service to his creatures. We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other Lords-areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.
3. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body [is] joined and knit together" (Ephesians 4:15-16). The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as Lord in Word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit. As the church of

pardoned sinners, it has to testify in the midst of a sinful world, with its faith as with its lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and his direction in the expectation of his appearance. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.

4. "You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-26) The various offices in the church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, apart from this ministry, could and were permitted to give to itself, or allow to be given to it, special leaders vested with ruling powers.
5. "Fear God Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17). Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the state has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. It fulfils this task by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The church acknowledges the benefit of its divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things. We reject the false doctrine, as though the state, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the state, thus itself becoming an organ of the state.
6. "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:20)." The Word of God is not fettered" (2 Timothy 2:9). The church's commission, upon which its freedom is founded, consists in delivering the message of the free grace of God to all people in Christ's stead, and therefore in the ministry of his own Word and work through sermon and sacrament. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church in human arrogance could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen desires, purposes, and plans (Hockenos, 2004: 179-180).

This rendition captures the essence and strong emphasis on rejecting false doctrine and anything contrary to the Word of God.

5.4 The Implications of the Theological Declaration of Barmen

The declaration at Barmen aimed to unite the three main evangelical (Protestant) churches in Germany. Also, the document sought to separate the church from the Nazi-influenced German Christians. There were three main Protestant churches in Germany during this time: Lutheran, Reformed and United. There was a strong Lutheran influence largely due to the influence of the reformer Martin Luther. Lutheran churches came together to support the Barmen confession due to the increasing German Christian threat. However, later, when the influence of the German Christians waned, so did some of the Lutherans' enthusiasm for the Barmen. After 1945, when World War II was coming to an end, so did the support for the Declaration. Leading theologians of the time such as Herman Sasse opposed Barmen due to its conflict with traditional Lutheran views. Other theologians such as Paul Althaus and Bishop Hans Meiser supported the document as opposition to the German Christians and the political implications but did not support the theological statement. As Hockenos explains:

After 1945 and in some cases as early as 1934, these Lutherans distanced themselves from the declaration; they felt Barmen's revision of core Lutheran doctrine was too drastic. They quite rightly perceived that the Barmen Declaration challenged four of the conservative Lutheran's most sacred tenets: the law-gospel dialectic, the orders of creation or divine orders, natural revelation, and the orthodox Lutheran understanding of Martin Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms (2004:23).

Part of the challenge of studying the Confessing Church and its response to the Holocaust is the lack of material on the Protestant churches' theological stance and response. Early books like that of Arthur C. Cochrane's *The Church's Confession* offer a contextual approach and a systematic approach to the formulation of the Barmen Declaration.

Another advantage of Cochrane's book is how he prepares the reader to understand the theological situation in Germany post WWI. The twentieth century proved to be a challenging time for the Protestant church. The ecclesiastical matters and the theological views differed greatly. Modernism, liberalism, and Darwinism had influenced much of German society. All these factors could have influenced his writing. It appears complicated to the modern reader but understanding the situation of the church during the early twentieth century reveals the nature of Barth's theology.

The first article unquestionably solidified the gospel of Jesus Christ as the overwhelming focus of the German Evangelical Church. The Barmen also was a summary of Karl Barth's theology since he was the primary author. Barth concluded that Jesus Christ is the sole authority in the

church. Barth believed that Christians should be obedient to the Word of God and not to a secular authority that was in contradiction to the Word. Heinz Zahrnt summarizes Barth's emphasis on Christ:

Jesus Christ, as he is witnessed to in the Holy Scriptures, is the one Word of God that we are to hear and in whom we are to trust and obey in living and dying. We reject the false teaching [of the German Christians] as if the church could and must recognize as the source of her proclamation other events and powers, figures and truths as God's revelation outside and alongside this one word of God (1996:73).

According to Barth there was no competition for authority in the church. Obviously, this was not the view of the Nazis and Adolf Hitler. Barth also made a definitive statement that the German Evangelical Church was made up of regional churches that were not part of the German Church of which newly elected Reich Bishop Ludwig Muller was in control (Stroud:41). Barth recognized that the church under Muller and the German Christians were straying away from the traditional confessions.

Barth mentions five positive statements in the Barmen and identifies five heretical concerns of the German Christians. The following translation of the Barmen reveals these statements by Barth. At the time of the Synod, Dietrich Bonhoeffer of the Confessing Church was in England. Bonhoeffer considered the Barmen a significant statement and his return from England was probably expedited due to the fact that the Confessing Church had a confession of faith that it held. More will be said about both Barth and Bonhoeffer in the following paragraphs.

Each section of the Barmen has significance for the Confessing Church, its response to the Aryan Paragraph, and its implications for the church. The Confessing Church wanted to make a statement by having a theological foundation in response to the Reich Bishop and the German Christians. The attempts by the Reich Bishop and the German Christians to Nazify the church was met with reasonable opposition. The Reich Bishop Mueller led the effort to remove all Jewish influence from the Church. As has been mentioned, drastic measures such as removing the Old Testament, exposing church staff of Jewish descent, downplaying the role of Christ, and eventually replacing images of the cross with a swastika fuelled the flame that the Confessing Church needed to respond to.

Article One focuses on making Christ central to the Christian church, not Adolf Hitler. Also, there was emphasis placed on the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, or scripture alone. Article Two emphasizes God's grace and law was authoritative in all areas of life. That meant that any other

authority sources were secondary to God and His law. This was significant due to the Two Kingdoms theology based on Romans 13, which will be considered in more detail in the next chapter. Article Three assured that the ecclesiastical structure would not be influenced by anything other than Christ's message, not political or ideological movements. Article Four proclaimed that church offices were to proclaim the gospel and engage in pastoral care, not to advance personal gain or profit. Article Five recognizes the state's place in the divine order and the right to use force to maintain order. At the same time, it reminded the state of its divine origin and submission to God. The last and sixth thesis asserts the mission of the church is to spread the message of God's free grace throughout the world (Hockenos, 24:2004). Matthew Hockenos also explains that the confession did not address many of the issues the Confessing Church was facing with the Jews.

The Barmen Declaration did not address the increasingly prevalent attacks on Jews and Judaism articulated by clergymen from both the German Christian movement and sections of the Confessing Church. Although theses III, IV and VI contributed to the confessional dispute between conservatives and radicals, it was I, II and V that caused the greatest alarm among Lutheran conservatives and had the greatest impact on the post-1945 differences between conservatives and reformers over guilt, repentance, political engagement, and Christian-Jewish relations (Hockenos, 2004:24).

The Confessing Church was willing to take a stand as far as the doctrinal concerns were considered, but there was no real statement on the Jewish-German or German Christian relations. Obedience to the core teachings of Christian doctrine were admirable, but there is no evidence, at least in the beginning that there was a stance taken solely on the treatment of the Jews and other factions of society such as the Gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, homosexuals, and the mentally/physically challenged.

One of Barth's aims was to respond to the Natural Theology of the German Christians. German theologians such as Paul Tillich who followed the philosophy that God can be known through nature and reason. Barth argued that only through Special Revelation can God be known. The German Christians in general held to Natural Theology. This view resulted in the elevation of German race and blood as superior, especially compared to that of the Jews. German Christian Walter Grundmann held to the erroneous view that the cross of Christ was revealed in a new light through the swastika (Hockenos: 25). This kind of absurdity is what Barth responded to in the Barmen. The response to Natural Theology was one of the first issues addressed in the

Barmen. For the German Christians and the Reich, the swastika took the place of the cross as a symbol of the German pride. The cross had become a symbol of weakness and defeat to the Nazis and the German Christians (Hockenos: 25). More will be said of Natural Theology in the chapter on Theological Implications. Here it suffices to know that there was a great schism within the Protestant church over theology and the Barmen Declaration reflected that.

The second article addresses the issue of law and gospel. This was a significant part of Lutheran theology. As the Lutherans saw law and gospel, "Christ was both our assurance of forgiveness (gospel) and claim upon our whole life (law)" (Hockenos: 25-26). Traditional Lutheranism saw the Law and gospel as distinctly separate. The Law of God revealed the sin of man while the gospel consoled man of his sins. Barth saw unity in the two and sought to reconcile this in the Barmen. This was not a popular stance among the Lutherans. Barth saw that the Law was only seen after one had been changed by the gospel reversing the traditional Lutheran order (Hockenos: 26). This would eventually lead to the conversation about church and state, which was commented on in the fifth thesis. Hockenos comments:

Of the six theses, the fifth is most important for an appreciation of the political and theological debates. Within the church in the aftermath of the war. At issue was the degree of authority Christians ought to allot the state. Conservatives granted it more, radicals less. The authors of Barmen V modified the orthodox Lutheran interpretation of Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in order to map out an alternative view of the relation of church and state that would address the totalitarian claims of the Nazi state (2013:26).

The conversation about the Two Kingdoms also is better addressed in the chapter on theological Implications for the Confessing Church. The main concern here is that Barth and the Confessing Church were moving away from the traditional views of the Lutheran church in Germany. This was even a source of contention within the Confessing Church.

While the Confessing Church struggled for consensus on the Barmen as far as the traditional Lutheran views were concerned, the Barmen sought to identify the National Socialists threat to the church. Those in support of the Barmen felt like Barth had drafted a confession that would do so. The Lutheran faction of the Confessing Church saw Barmen as a confession that was only fitting for the time of the war. After the war, many Lutherans ceased to use the Barmen because of its view of doctrines like that of the Two Kingdoms.

5.5 Implications for the Confessing Church

The theological implications of Barmen are just a sample of the larger theological implications for the Confessing Church in the time of the Holocaust. The theological Christian-ethical implications for the Confessing Church are the thesis of this work. It will suffice here to simply introduce some of the ideas about theology while developing them further in chapter 6 of the paper. It is true that the Barmen laid a foundation for the more extensive questions about the stance and the response of the Confessing Church. The response is the question that needs to be resolved; whether it was theological or ethical?

Arthur G. Cochrane in his book, *The Church's Confession under Hitler*, addresses ten areas of theological history of the Confessing Church's Barmen Declaration. Only a few will be considered that apply directly to the thesis of this paper. First, and maybe the most significant concern is that the Confessing Church *confesses Jesus Christ* as the sole authority of the church (John 14:6). Secondly, *Jesus is the source of the revelation of God as is corroborated in God's Word*. The Bible reveals the nature and work of Jesus Christ and is the sole authority on its subject matter (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The third area of importance is that *the church is a unified whole*. There is only one true church. This was one of the emphases that Bonhoeffer focused on and wrote his doctoral dissertation about. Ecclesiology, of the doctrine of the church, was the foundation for *Life Together* that Bonhoeffer wrote. This was also one of the major tenets of the Barmen. Fourth, the Barmen *rejected the heresy of the German Christians and the Reich Bishop*. At the end of each thesis it states that the Confessing Church rejects false doctrine. The attempt at Nazification of the churches was implementing false doctrine of the part of the German Christians and Reich Bishop Muller. The Apostle Paul warned several churches in letters in the New Testament to be aware of false teachers. John wrote in Revelation chapter two about the church at Pergamum and the acceptance of the Nicolaitans and their false teaching. The Barmen made this a clear statement by its sheer repetition. Fifth, the Barmen had an emphasis on *ethical considerations on political and social issues*. The Divine Command Theory in ethics stresses obedience to biblical commands. This, according to Barmen was found in the God's Word as revealed through Jesus Christ. This became a huge controversy due the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms which Martin Luther had popularized among the Germans. Luther based his argument on Romans thirteen. Contemporary society focuses on what has been termed "separation of church and state." Sixth and lastly, *conversion not race, or blood determines church membership*. The Aryan Paragraph called for the removal of all non-Aryans from leadership positions in the church. The Confessing Church started out challenging

this restriction, but it soon waned in the church struggle. Here is where one of the main premises of this paper is concerned. Did the Confessing Church respond properly (theological and ethical) to the Holocaust? (Cochrane, 1962: 181-216.)

These are not all the theological summaries that Cochrane comments on in his book; it is a condensed version. Cochrane summarizes the history of a confession of faith as it relates to Barmen in his ten statements. For the purposes of the work, the main points have been considered that were addressed in Barmen. The next chapter will delve into the primary theological concerns of the Confessing Church. One can summarize the theological implications, but a thorough investigation would take volumes.

CHAPTER 6 THE STUTTGART CONFESSION OF GUILT

6.1 The Stuttgart Confession of Guilt

It was 1945 and the war had ended, but the revelation of what had truly taken place with Hitler was just beginning. Allied Forces took control of Germany and the atrocities that were committed in the “Final Solution” or the attempt to rid Germany of all Jewishness were beginning to be fully realized. The concentration camps revealed how cruel humanity could be; bodies were found everywhere! The residue of mass killings could not be hidden. Adolf Hitler committed suicide before he could be captured, and a few weeks before that, Confessing Church leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in the Flossenburg Concentration Camp. Hundreds of Confessing Church pastors had been imprisoned, died on the battlefield, remained in hiding, or were executed by the Nazis from 1933-1945. The number of Confessing Church pastors had dwindled. Among those who remained were Martin Niemöller, Theophil Wurm, Hans Asmussen, Otto Dibelius, and Karl Barth. This is not an exclusive list, but these are the more recognizable names. There were others who signed the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, but these are some of the more notable leaders with a voice in the future of the Confessing Church.

How could these atrocities have happened? Could the Nazis have been stopped? If so, what could have been done differently? There were approximately 45 million Protestants in Germany during the Holocaust. Was that enough people to make a difference? It is easy to say yes without considering the context and circumstances. Among these 45 million, the church was split in two factions and was far from united. The Confessing Church was pieced together as the flagship presence of the German Protestants after the war. This was largely a result of the other faction; the German Christians being restricted due to their support and involvement with the Nazi party (Bergen, 1996:4). Martin Niemöller was one of the surviving Confessing Church leaders. He was faced with all the questions about why this had been allowed by the church. The Stuttgart Confession of Guilt was the attempt to assume responsibility by the Confessing Church members that survived, as well as the German Evangelical Church.

6.2 Confessions of Guilt

The war ended on 6 May 1945 when the Nazis surrendered to the Allied Forces. The reality of what had taken place was surreal for many, including the Germans. The world was now seeing what had been taking place under the totalitarian regime of Hitler. As troops encountered the concentration camps, the horror of genocide was evident. The primary targets were Jews,

although many others fell prey to the ideology of Germanic race and blood. Wolfgang Gerlach comments:

On Ascension Day 1945, two days after the Nazi surrender on 8 May, Bishop Wurm concluded a sermon with “a word to our people.....in the name of our Wittenberg Protestant Church and as the spokesman of the entire Confessing Church in Germany.” Wurm directed his comments primarily to the state, which had not listened to the churches’ warnings: “How much distress and suffering could have been avoided if those who had held leadership in Germany had used their power conscientiously, justly, prudently. From the side of the two Christian churches, there was no shortage of attempts to remind the rulers of their responsibility to God and to human beings. But these admonitions either were not noted or were rejected as interference in state affairs” (2000:23).

Many of the German pastors still reeked of anti-Semitic attitudes. Some reluctantly assumed partial responsibility for what had taken place. Even Martin Niemöller, the leading Confessing Church representative, was questioned about his motives in assuming any responsibility.

After the war had concluded and the occupation by the Allied Forces was in full control, the Confessing Church was fractured and scattered. Some of the members had died during the imprisonments and through concentration camp attrition; others had been killed on the battlefields. The Allied Forces most likely had some of the members imprisoned until investigations and trials were completed. Niemöller was convinced that a move forward for the German Evangelical Church would have to be done with the Confessing Church taking a major leadership role. The problem that he was faced with reuniting them before the important meeting that was going to take place in Treysa in Hesse. Bringing the Confessing Church together in order to move forward was not going to be easy. The Allies had restrictions on travel and communication. One could not simply buy a train ticket and travel in the country wherever one wished. One could not simply go to the post office and mail a letter as they could have during the non-war years (Schmidt, 1959:141).

In July 1945, Niemöller pleaded with the Allied Force for an opportunity to gather the remaining members together. “The German Church Struggle” as it has been referred to, caused dissention in the Protestant Church in Germany during the Hitler years. Niemöller was concerned that the church leaders at the present time were comprised of those who were considered neutral in the affairs of the church (Schmidt, 1959: 142). In Christianity there were Catholics, Protestants, and those who are referred to as the “neutrals.” The neutrals were more consistent with what Victoria Barnett calls the “bystanders” (Barnett, 2000). The neutrals or bystanders did not take a side during the Church Struggle or during the Holocaust. They simply were there without any

response. Niemöller did not envision the neutrals leading the way for the re-establishment of the church. At Niemöller's request, he is on record as stating:

It is all-important, therefore, that the Confessing Church should be given the opportunity which it as present lacks. I am convinced that it is through the Confessing Church that the only possible way can be found, as far as the Evangelical Churches are concerned, to achieve a genuine re-orientation of the spiritual life of our people (Schmidt, 1959:142).

This plea was to the Occupying Powers. Niemöller was also under great duress during this time. It was not long before this that he was retained and unable to be free to concern himself with ecclesiastical matters. Niemöller was still partially separated from his family and most assuredly would have preferred to be back in Dahlem at his old parish. Now he had concerned himself with the ecclesiastical matters of Germany in a post-war era.

On 21 August 1945, the Reich Council of Brethren of the Confessing Church had met in Frankfurt-am-Main for the first time since the war. Karl Barth had made his way to the meeting from Switzerland supposedly masked as an American G.I. in uniform (Schmidt: 142). Initially, there was a time for re-acquaintance with one another. Time, Nazis, and war had caused a lot of suffering amongst them and many had not seen each other in years. Then, a delegation of representatives was elected to go to the German Evangelical Church meeting in Treysa. The meeting was initially called to address the humanitarian concerns for refugees from Eastern Germany. The Confessing Church was not originally supposed to take part in the meeting until the Reich Council of the Brethren appointed delegates to attend.

The next concern for the Council before Treysa was the issue of collective guilt for the events of the past ten years. Who was responsible or accountable for the atrocities? One may argue that responsibility is solely on the Nazis for their actions. The Council resolved that all churches and all Christians were liable for not making a more concerted effort to stop the injustices or the political abuses of the Nazis (Schmidt: 143).

During this meeting an initial drafting of a confessional statement was made. The representatives drafted the following statement:

Moral standards do not suffice to measure the magnitude of the guilt that our people have brought upon themselves. Newer and newer deeds of inhumanity become known. Many people still cannot believe that all of this is supposed to be true. In the abyss of our guilt, the body and soul of our people are mortally threatened. We confess our guilt and submit ourselves to the burden of its consequences (Gerlach, 2000: 224).

As the church concerned itself with rebuilding, many questions about the past still remained. Niemöller was encouraged by the sentiment that he felt concerning the church's responsibility in the Holocaust and the need to make a statement or confession of guilt that communicated it. He made a statement about the meeting that it was "the finest demonstration of truly fraternal solidarity in serious and practical discussion ever granted us" (Schmidt: 143). He was pleased with the progress that had been made, but others remained sceptical of the "Solidarity of Guilt." The church was still in a broken state of chaos in many ways. The confessional status of the church was still under consideration. The last attempt to unify the German Evangelical Church came at the Barmen Synod. The Barmen Synod had taken place over ten years earlier. As a result of the synod, there remained a broken fellowship between the Lutherans and the other Protestant churches.

A few days later the church held a conference at Treysa. This was the first national German Protestant Church meeting after the war ended. In attendance were regional church representatives, the Committee for Church Unity and the Confessing Church Reich Council of Brethren. Martin Niemöller was influential in drafting the Council of Brethren's statement (Gerlach: 224).

The statement that was drafted by the Council read as follows:

I must strike a note here that undoubtedly has been neglected in all that we have heard up to now. Certainly, we stand before a state of chaos and, in many cases, we are already in the middle of it. But we must ask what has brought us to this. Our distress is not due to the fact that we have lost the war... Nor is our situation today primarily the fault of people and of the Nazis; how could they have followed a path that they did not know; they simply believed, after all, that they were on the right path! -No, the real guilt rests with the church, for it alone knew that the path being taken would led to ruin, and it did not warn our people; it did not expose the injustice that occurred, or did so only when it was too late.

And here the Confessing Church bears a particularly large measure of guilt, for it saw most clearly what was developing; it even spoke about it, and then became tired and feared men more than the living God. And so the catastrophe has broken over us all and drawn us, with everyone else, into its turbulence. But we, the church, must beat our breast and confess; my guilt, my enormous guilt! - This is what we must say today to our people and to Christendom that we do not stand before them and approach them as the pious and just; on the contrary, we are guilty, and want to try in the future to recognize our duty correctly and to carry it out faithfully...

What is at issue is not just that we, as a church, have done this or that wrongly in the past... But that, through disobedience, we fundamentally neglected the office with which we were charged and with that have become guilty (Gerlach, 2000:224-225).

The church was divided over how much responsibility should be assumed by those of the Confessing Church, the German Evangelical Church, and the German people in general. During this time there was little mention of definitive guilt over what had happened to the Jews in particular. The Jews had been slaughtered and the Christians in Germany did not want to be directly tied to the events. The Germans were fearful of the consequences of admitting guilt and the Allies' response. Niemöller was calling for a statement of guilt, but even he was struggling with nationalism and Germany's future as a result of the Holocaust (Hockenos, 2018:165). At the Treysa Conference the following statement was made:

Amidst the failures of the church and the people, God granted men and women of all confessions, classes, and parties the power to rise up against injustice and arbitrariness, to suffer and to die. Where the church took its responsibility seriously, it summoned human beings to observe the commandments of God, addressed breaches of law and wickedness, the guilt in concentration camps, the mistreatment and murder of Jews and the sick, and sought to prevent the seduction of the young. But it was driven back to the realm of the church. The public was no longer allowed to hear its word; no one heard what it proclaimed. And then came the wrath of God. It took from us what human beings wanted to save (Gerlach, 2000:225-226).

The general sentiment of those from outside the German Evangelical Church was that a genuine confession of guilt had not been achieved yet. This mostly came from Americans and the Allied Forces that occupied Germany. Many Germans still embraced the idea of suffering at the hands of the Allies, specifically the Russian Army. Why would they confess responsibility? Who was responsible for their suffering? The questions probably stemmed from the Treaty of Versailles, the failed Weimar Republic, and the embarrassment of World War I. The consequences imposed on Germany from these events were devastating to the economy and the military. The Americans who interacted with Niemöller were as suspicious of his intentions as they were with most Germans. They initially assumed that all Germans were part of the Nazi Party. After an interview where he made clear his loyalty to the Fatherland, the Allied Forces grew even more suspicious. Victoria Barnett interviewed Niemöller in 1981 and asked him why he tried to re-enlist during his retention at a concentration camp during WW II. Niemöller commented on his loyalty to the "Fatherland" (Germany) as the motivating factor for trying to re-enlist (Barnett, 1992).

6.3 The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt

The representatives of the Evangelical Church of Germany penned these words in the document:

The Council of the Protestant Church in Germany welcomes representatives of the World Council of Churches to its meeting on October 18-19, 1945, in Stuttgart.

We are the more thankful for this visit, as we know ourselves to be with our people in great a great community of suffering, but also in a great solidarity of guilt. With great anguish we state through us has endless suffering been brought to many peoples and countries. What we have often borne witness to before our congregations, we now declare in the name of the whole church. We have for many years struggled in the name of Jesus Christ against the spirit which found its terrible expression in the National Socialist regime of tyranny, but we accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently.

Now a new beginning can be made in our churches. Grounded on the Holy Scriptures, directed with all earnestness toward the only Lord of the Church, they now proceed to cleanse themselves from influences alien to the faith and to set themselves in order. Our hope is in the God of grace and mercy that He will use our churches as His instruments and will give them authority to proclaim His Word, and in obedience to His will to work creatively among ourselves and among our people.

That in this new beginning we may become wholeheartedly united with the other churches of the ecumenical fellowship fills us with deep joy.

We hope in God that through the common the service of the churches the spirit of violence and revenge which again today tends to become powerful may be brought under control in the whole world, and that the spirit of peace and love may gain the mastery, wherein alone tortured humanity can find healing.

So, in an hour in which the whole world needs a new beginning we pray: "Venti Creator Spiritus."

Bishop Wurm- Bishop Meiser- Superintendent Hahn- Bishop Dibelius- Professor Smend- Pastor Asmussen-Pastor Niemöller- Landesoeirchenrat Lilje-Superintendent Held- Pastor Niesel- Dr Heinemann (Hockenos, 2004: 187).

While this statement reveals on some level a confession of guilt, it is still vague. There certainly is no specific mention of what happened to the Jews, the Gypsies, the mentally and physically challenged who were part of the T-4 programme and many other groups considered of non-Aryan descent. There is an admission that more could have been done, but much of the focus is on a "new beginning" for the church. In the statement there was a comment about unifying the Protestant Church in Germany. Also, there is a brief statement made about the tyranny of the National Socialist Regime. It can be argued that there was a focus on God, Jesus Christ, and

the Scriptures, but not on the Jews specifically. There are certainly times when words need to be limited. With the magnitude of the Holocaust there were no words to describe what had taken place.

From the outside, it is also easy to criticize what was and was not said. The context of the drafting of the Stuttgart Declaration was not ideal. There was pressure from the Allied Force, there was pressure from the ecumenical world, and there was pressure from within Germany. Many people in Germany were concerned about what their future looked like. The country had been destroyed physically and emotionally. The World Council of Churches (WCC) had representatives at the meeting. These were peers for members of the Confessing Church. The eyes of the ecclesiastical world were on the Confessing Church to convey the responsibility for the horrific sight that was seen by the Allied Forces during occupation. The visible evidence demanded a response for who was guilty of these crimes. The verdict was going to be a result of whose conscience was burdened the most. Martin Niemöller was a man consciously burdened about the Confessing Church's response to Nazis.

6.3.1 Stuttgart's contents

The confession is a brief statement of guilt. It only has six paragraphs that are short in nature and vague in content. It can be divided in two parts: the first section dealt with the Nazis and the pre-war and present war years. The first paragraph dealt primarily with welcoming those representatives of the World Council of Churches. To some this may seem pointless in the context of the atrocities that had taken place. One thing this accomplished is that it invited the WCC to participate in post-war reparations and support. The remainder of the document contained the now famous statement of confession or guilt. The document flows into what the future of the church needs to be. Here it is mentioned that "Now a new beginning can be made in our churches" (Hockenos, 2004:76). In the second paragraph the confession states "a great solidarity of guilt" was used to express the Confessing Church and the representatives view of the past. It continues by stating, "With great anguish we state: Through us has endless suffering been brought upon many peoples and countries. We accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently" (Hockenos: 76).

No specific examples were given of the guilt that had occurred. German guilt was vaguely mentioned, and brief mention was made of the tyranny of the Nazis and the opposition on behalf of the church. Beyond the second paragraph, the Nazi past was not mentioned. The confession did call for "cleansing" of the church. It appears that the neglect of spiritual disciplines such as

prayer, witnessing and loving had been conceded. The Barmen Declaration seems to have been forgotten at this point. The focus on cleansing within the church can be seen in the statement, "cleanse themselves from influences alien to the faith and to set themselves in order" (Hockenos: 76). Germany was devastated; recovery would be a long arduous process. A new beginning is what was needed. The closing statement reveals the sentiment of the Confessing Church and the representatives of the council. "So, in an hour in which the whole world needs a new beginning we pray: 'Veni Creator Spiritus' [Come, Creator Spirit]" (Hockenos: 76). Superintendent Fritz Heuner of the Dortmund Church sensed the sentiments of the Confessing Church in the confession of guilt. The Confessing Church along with Martin Niemöller saw a need for repentance and confession. As early as 1942, Hans Asmussen expressed the view that the German people and the church were responsible for not taking a stronger stance against the Nazis. Niemöller, Asmussen, other representatives from the Confessing Church and German Reformed Churches admitted that the church did not do enough to stop the injustices and they grieved the consequences of their omission of response (Hockenos: 76-77).

6.4 The Stuttgart Confession Influences

It is not clear who had more influence with the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt: Bishop Theophil Wurm or Martin Niemöller. Almost eleven years after the meeting, the newly-formed Council of the Evangelical Church of Germany met in Stuttgart. The Confessing Church had gone through attrition with the persecuting of many pastors and leaders, resulting in the newly-formed council. The Council began the process of making a statement that would satisfy each faction of the representatives. There was not a unanimous consensus as with the Theological Declaration of Barmen. The lack of a definitive statement of guilt could be a concern for some. There was no mention of the Jews specifically or any other minority. This may be an indication that either the focus was on state church relations or that the Confessing Church and those involved in the council were not willing to clarify what they were guilty of. The Confession did state that it opposed the National Socialists, even though it is unclear where pastors such as Niemöller stood on the issue. Otto Dibelius "preached sermons and gave speeches that were zealous in their support for the Nazis in 1933" (Hockenos, 2004:67). Dibelius may not have been considered among the majority of the Confessing Church members, but it is a reminder of the strong German Nationalistic influences within the Confessing Church.

6.4.1 Martin Niemöller

Niemöller may not have been the only voice for an appeal to accept responsibility, but he certainly had the most passion for it. He was one of the few key figures left from the Confessing Church. His time spent in concentration camps had to be humbling for the former U-boat commander. It still appeared that Niemöller, like others, had a strong national pride. Many of the American church leaders thought Niemöller might be a key figure in implementing a new government for Germany. On 5 June 1945, Niemöller gave his American supporters reason to question where he stood on guilt of the German people and the Confessing Church. Niemöller was interviewed by American and British war correspondents. In the interview Niemöller “had nourished the hope that National Socialism, if it had gone the right way, might have developed into a system for creating good for the German people.” For Martin Niemöller the real concern was religious not political (Hockenos, 2018:163). In the context of war, Niemöller was clear on his German loyalty by saying, “A German doesn’t ask is it just or unjust, but he feels bound to join the ranks. I think the German people will be a little more cautious in the future, but more than this I cannot promise” (Hockenos: 163). With this statement it is obvious that as a representative of the Confessing Church to say “a little more cautious” does not appear to have the force of sorrow for what had happened during the Holocaust. Whether or not war was the subject of this statement it makes no difference. The reality of the oppression and injustice was the same. The horrifying images of the millions that had been murdered by the Nazis were no less important because of the war. In all actuality, had the war not happened, there likely would have been many more people killed at the hands of the Nazis while enacting the “Final Solution.”

The lines for Niemöller may have been blurred between Confessing Church leader and former U-boat commander. Now his representation of the Confessing Church was in question. His American supporters along with other World Council of Church leaders began to encourage Niemöller to take a different approach if he wanted help in rebuilding the church in Germany. He may have made these statements hastily. He was under a tremendous amount of stress. He had been separated from his family since the war. He was technically still under the authority of the Allied Forces.

Niemöller was encouraged by many including Karl Barth to invoke or appeal for a confession of guilt. “Niemöller was without equal in his emotional appeals for Christians to take seriously their obligation to confess and repent” (Hockenos: 68). His role as a spokesperson for the Council of the Brethren at Treysa gave him a platform for his views. This was over 10 years removed from

the Theological Declaration at Barmen. Niemöller was convicted that the Stuttgart Confession had no mention of the Confessing Church's failure to honour the theological and ethical principles set forth Barmen. Niemöller assumed that responsibility fell on the Confessing Church primarily. The Barmen was a confession that had a major influence on the Confessing Church as well as the difference factions of ecclesiastical representation in the Confessing Church. In August 1945, Niemöller made the following statement:

Certainly, we are confronted by horrible deprivation and chaos... We must ask ourselves, however, what brought this about? The disastrous situation in which we live is not a result of the fact that we lost the war. Who among us could wish that we had won? Where would we be now if Hitler had won? It is not difficult to imagine the chaos and catastrophe that would have caused (Hockenos, 2004:68).

He was very confident that the Confessing Church or the church in general was to blame for the events of the Holocaust. In another accusatory statement Niemöller said:

No, the real guilt lies on the church because it alone knew that the way being taken would lead to disaster, and it did not warn our people, it did not unmask the injustice that had occurred, or only when it was too late. And here the Confessing Church bears a particularly large measure of blame, for it saw most clearly what was developing. It even spoke out about it, but then became tired and stood more in fear of human beings than of the living God. It is for this reason that the catastrophe has broken out over us and we are now pulled into the whirlpool. We, the church, however, have to beat our breast and confess: my guilt, my guilt, my enormous guilt (Hockenos, 2004: 68).

While Niemöller was confident that measures of responsibility remain with the Confessing Church, he also attributed some of the responsibility to Protestant Church and state relations which dated all the way back to the sixteenth century. This period of time was critical for church and state relations. The tension of the Protestant Reformation was still fresh during the sixteenth century. Martin Luther was also a major influence among German Protestants. As will be discussed in the next chapter on theological implications, Luther's view of the Two Kingdoms absolved the church of any responsibility to oppose the state since it was instituted by God. Niemöller still held deep Lutheran convictions which led to internal conflict. Niemöller saw the failure of the church to speak out against the state as a gross misunderstanding of Luther's Two Kingdoms theology (Hockenos: 70). According to Niemöller, the church and especially the Confessing Church was responsible for speaking out against the basic infringement of human rights.

His Nationalism was a source of contention for him; however, he had been convinced that repentance was necessary for the church. Niemöller insisted that the silence of the church was a result of the church's close relations to the state (Hockenos: 69). Hockenos comments, "As an Erastian church (*Behördenkirche*), one that allowed state supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs, the church neglected its special God-given commission" (Hockenos: 69). Niemöller was now calling for a church that looked more like what Bonhoeffer called "costly discipleship" and not made of "cheap grace" (72). Niemöller was calling for the church to be proactive and initiate responsibility for the Holocaust. This church was called (*Lebendige Kirche*) "a living church" (69).

The term "solidarity of guilt" was critical to understanding the implications for the Confessing Church and the German people. The sufferings of the German people became the focus of the conversation. Many were asking why the German had to assume guilt when they had suffered so much. This will be expanded on under political implications.

6.5 Pressure to respond

As mentioned previously, the internal and external pressures for a confession of guilt weighed heavily on the Confessing Church minds as well as all the Protestant Christians. A confession of guilt could influence reparations or future restrictions on the German people. This was not so far removed from the Treaty of Versailles that Germany had forgotten the worldwide humiliation it had experienced. The Treaty resulted in heavy reparations financially, restriction in military, restriction in land occupation, and severe damage to the pride of Germany. This along with the seeming failure of the Weimar Republic left many Germans in a hopeless and embarrassed state of mind.

There were enough pastors left who remembered those days and did not want to return or add to them. Their national pride was in question and they wanted to preserve what dignity they had left. It is no small thing for a country to have to rebuild and depend on other nations to help. Germany was fragile due to Hitler's mishandlings of the war and depletion of its resources. The Allies occupied many of the major cities. This was a very difficult time for those who were not directly involved in the Holocaust or the atrocities that had taken place. There were bystanders, those who stood by and knew of some of the atrocities but chose to turn a blind eye and there were those who did not know and did not want to know. Either way, everyone would be affected. The church would be affected no less; actually, it may have suffered more. The Reich Brethren, consisting of Confessing Church members, sought to re-establish their country and most

importantly the church. They wanted to rebuild the church in Germany, the one true church that Hitler tried to dismantle.

There were foreign church leaders who were pressuring the Confessing Church to respond. As has been mentioned, the presence of the World Council of Churches at the Treysa Conference was pressured itself. This presence of the WCC was unexpected in its magnitude. A few of the men that attended included Bishop Theophil Wurm, Bishop George Bell of Chichester, and Wilhelm Visser't Hooft. The presence of these three alone was significant. Visser't Hooft wrote the following letter prior to the conference:

The conversation will be very much easier if the Confessing Church of Germany would speak out openly-not only about the crimes of the Nazis, but also particularly about the sins of omission of German people, including the church. The Christians of other countries do not wish to appear as Pharisees. But they require that it be openly said...that the German people and the church too did not speak [against Nazism] with sufficient clarity and sufficient emphasis (Hockenos, 2004:78).

A statement of this kind exerted unwanted pressure on Niemöller, who was already pressured from his own circumstances. Visser't Hooft wrote Niemöller a letter previously explaining why he thought an invitation to the WCC delegates would be good for Niemöller (78-79).

Karl Barth, who wrote the Theological Declaration of Barmen, wrote Niemöller as well and expressed his concern about the situation. Barth wrote a statement that he thought was proper for the moment in time.

The provisional leadership of the Evangelical Church in Germany recognizes and declares that the German people erred when they placed themselves in the hands of Adolf Hitler. It recognizes and declares that the misery, which has spread over Europe and Germany, is a consequence of that error. It recognizes and declares that through false statements and silence the Evangelicals Church in Germany shares in the responsibility for this error (Hockenos, 2004:80).

Barth lectured in various countries and was unable to give a definitive statement about the Confessing Church's response of guilt or responsibility of these tragic events. It was of course Barth who had written the Barmen Declaration and the Confessing Church appeared to have strayed from this initial document that became the theological foundation for the Confessing Church. One could assume that he felt somewhat responsible for the straying from the document. Barth was removed from his post as a lecturer in Germany during the height of the Nazi dominance in German universities. These are just some of the internal pressures that were mounting against the Confessing Church and Niemöller had to respond. There were obviously others, but it suffices here to say that internal pressures can be some of the strongest.

The external pressures that will be considered were primarily political in nature. The church, even though they may have been from other countries or part of the WCC can be considered internal from the perspective of the universal church, the people of God for all time and places. The political pressures had long term ramifications for Germany as a whole. The response needed to rebuild Germany was enormous. If the church did not respond in a way that was satisfactory to the political entities around the world, they may not receive the humanitarian assistance that was needed to rebuild Germany.

6.6 The Response of the Confession

It was apparent from the Confession of Guilt that the Confessing Church had a sense of failure about its response to the Holocaust. This will be considered in the last chapter on the overall response, but two statements make it clear that there was regret. The first was the statement “infinite sorrow has been brought upon many peoples and lands” (Scholder, 1989:32). The Confessing Church members had come to the realization that the scope of this event was timeless and cultureless. This event had impacted an entire world for over seventy years and the impact continues to be felt. It was not possible in 1945 to know the continuing implications of the Holocaust for decades to come. To say that the sorrow was “infinite” may have been a prophetic statement. The second statement that is worth noting was the practical spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith and practice. “We regret that we did not confess more boldly, pray more loyally, believe more cheerfully and love more ardently” (32). Those are the basic tenets of the Protestant faith.

It could be argued and will be discussed further that to “love more ardently” could sum up the whole guilt of omission. Matthew 22:36-40 says:

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. ³And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (ESVUK).

It will be considered in the last two chapters what it means to love God in this way and how that translates to loving one’s neighbour the way Jesus describes it here to the Pharisees. The argument could be made that the Confessing Church was no different from the Pharisees by saying one thing at Barmen and doing another, which was acknowledged at Stuttgart. It is worth mentioning here that it is easy to criticize the Confessing Church when one is looking on the

Holocaust from a historical perspective. It should be supposed that possibly a different perspective would be taken from living in Germany from the 1933-1945. It is also worth mentioning that words were not needed for those like Dietrich Bonhoeffer of the Confessing Church. Bonhoeffer showed his love through his actions, actions that ultimately cost him his life. As one person said, "A person's moral value begins only when he is ready to give his life for his convictions" (Scheurig, 1973:191).

CHAPTER 7 THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

7.1 The Theological influence in the Confessing Church

In the previous chapter, the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt of the Confessing Church was examined. The Declaration of Guilt was not only a statement of conscience about the missed opportunities of the Confessing Church, but also an acknowledgement that the Confessing Church did not observe the Barmen Declaration in its entirety. The Barmen Declaration, which was the founding document of the Confessing Church, stated the guiding principles by which they were to act. First, one can question if they remained faithful to the articles of the Barmen Declaration. Second, looking back on the Holocaust today, did the Barmen Declaration establish the right areas of theology and ethical (righteous as some chose) statements that corresponded with the events with which the church was faced?

There are areas of theology specific to the context of the Holocaust: *The Two Kingdoms Theology, Imago Dei, true knowledge, conscience, and anti-Semitism and salvation history.* While each category can be broken down into sub-categories, here consideration will only be given to the direct subject matters as it relates to the Confessing Church and the principles that were established within. In the area of ethical studies, or what is right and wrong, and how it is determined, we will examine the Confessing Church to see if the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust was consistent with biblical principles. If not, what should have been done another way? Different periods in history have faced various theological influences and the Holocaust presented theologians and Christians with its own unique challenges. Each area of theology played a special role in the response of the Confessing Church to the Holocaust.

7.2 The Two Kingdoms

The journey begins with the Two Kingdoms theology, also referred to as the Two Spheres. Martin Luther has been honoured with formalizing Two Kingdoms theology, which may be partly true. Luther had a view of two distinct spheres of the spiritual and the secular. One ruled the people of God and the other ruled over the world of God. Luther probably gleaned this from Augustine of Hippo that initiated this with his book, *The City of God* (413-426 AD) which developed the eschatological view, or end time views. *The City of God* was written in response to the taking of Rome by Alaric leader of the Goths in 410 AD. Christian historian Everett Ferguson writes about the work:

Although Rome was no longer the capital of the empire, the city was important to all as the symbol of the empire. Pagans were saying that what happened to

Rome was a punishment by the gods of the Republic for forsaking their worship. The work grew from an occasional piece to become a comprehensive apologetic responding to paganism and to offer a providential philosophy of history based on the two cities, the city of the world and the heavenly city (Ferguson, 2005:272).

Luther was likely influenced by this work. He could have been using an allegorical style of hermeneutic. As an Augustinian monk, he most likely meditated on Augustine's writings. Luther viewed the cities by the terminology of "kingdoms." The kingdoms represented the spiritual kingdom and the secular kingdom and were the early foundation of the church versus State debate. Luther elaborated on the concept by interweaving the doctrines of law and grace into it. Just as Augustine probably influenced Luther, Luther in all probability influenced the German Lutheran's with his interpretation of Romans 13 (Metaxas, 2017).

Martin Luther made a distinction between law and gospel in his theology. He compared the law of God with the gospel. The law of God shows one how to be right with God. The gospel shows one how to avoid the judgment of God. Luther comments: The Christian submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honours those in authority, serves, helps and does all he can to assist the governing authority, which it may continue to function and be held in honour and fear.

Our theology and St. Augustine are progressing well, and with God's help rule at our university. Aristotle is gradually falling from his throne, and the final doom is only a matter of time. It is amazing how the students disdain the lectures on the Sentences. Indeed, no one can expect to have any students if he does not want to teach his theology, that is, lecture on the Bible or on St. Augustine, or on another teacher of ecclesiastical eminence. (Pelikan and Lehman [1955-86] in the American Edition of Luther's Works vol.48:52 a letter from Luther [1517] to his friend Johannes Lang on the influence of St. Augustine).

Luther was adamant that the two were distinct in purpose and function and that they should remain separate. John Calvin also saw the differences between the two but did not consider it as central to theology as the Lutherans did. The Lutherans often critiqued Calvin's followers for combining the two. The Confessing Church was made up of both Lutheran and Reformed or Calvinists factions. One theologian is knowledgeable of both. John M. Frame comments on the history of both these churches and their view or uses of the law:

Traditionally, Lutherans and Calvinists have distinguished three uses of the law: (1) to restrain evil in society, (2) to terrify sinners in order to drive them to Christ, and (3) to provide guidance to those who believe to live the Christian life There have been controversies among Lutherans about the legitimacy of the third use, and a number of Calvinists have also been uncomfortable with it, thinking that the third use leads to legalism or moralism (2013:96-97).

According to Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul states: "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Paul states that grace does not work as the source of salvation. One is not saved by keeping the law, but that does not release one from the obligation of obeying the law. This is a common law and grace conversation. One is not saved by doing a good work or works, but only by God's grace through faith. Since the Reformation, faith in God's grace has been the focus of the means of salvation for Protestants, not works (Frame, 2008:179). The law of God reveals his ethical commands for people to live by. The grace of God reveals God's promise of redemption through Jesus Christ. The law certainly has a place in salvific history. The law reveals God's standard for the Christian life. The Christian life is supposed to be one of obedience to God's divine commands. This is where Christian ethicists get their categorization called the Divine Command Theory.

The law reveals God's commands and the expectations He has for His people to live by. The law of God is the way God designed to reveal sin and to measure justice by for His people. The law demonstrates God's expectation for morals in humanity and it reveals the consequences of disobeying those laws. God's judgment of sinful man is eternal not temporal. It is only through the lovingkindness of God that He allows His people to repent of their sin through the priests offering up sacrifices of animals to make atonement. In the New Testament, Jesus becomes the ultimate demonstration of God's love for mankind and assuring a onetime atonement for those who confess Christ Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9-13). There is a punishment for disobeying God's imperatives or commands, that extends in the realm of glorification or the Heavenly Kingdom (Romans 6:23). God gave a directive for Adam and Eve to not eat from the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Even though He gave them the freedom to eat of all other trees, they disobeyed God and sought the one thing that would make them more like Him. They believed a lie from Satan, Christians call this disobedience sin, instead obeying the truth from God (Genesis 3). Paul states that once God's commands had been disobeyed there was an eternal consequence, which is separation from God. This separation can only be resolved by confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and believing that Jesus was the Son of God, raised from the dead, an atonement for man's sin (Romans 10:9-10). Paul previously stated that everyone is guilty, and there is no one who is good on their own (Romans 3:10-12). This is essentially the distinction between law and gospel.

This distinction between law and gospel can be a foreshadowing of the more pressing issue of church versus state. What is the relationship between church and state? This became one of

the main concerns for the Confessing Church. Lutherans retained the traditional teaching that was formulated by Martin Luther. He posited a distinction between the kingdom of God and the secular or earthly kingdom. The words *reign, realm, and sphere* are all synonymous with the kingdom in Luther's view. Whatever terminology is used, the idea is that God rules over the church with Jesus and His Spirit, while the state and natural law rule over the secular world. The basis for this "Two Kingdoms" theology is derived from Romans 13:1-7:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities, resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honour to whom honour is owed (ESVUK).

The traditional Lutheran view was that obeying the state was obeying God. Theologian John Frame describes this thought process by explaining:

Luther also distinguished two kingdoms, in effect a kingdom of law and a kingdom of gospel. The kingdom of law was the civil order, ruled by the state. The kingdom of gospel was the order of salvation, ruled by the church. The civil order is secular, the sacred. The civil order is governed by natural law, the sacred order by Scripture. Every believer belongs to both kingdoms, but the two do not overlap in their functions (2013: 97).

How one approaches the subject of church and state is essential to understanding the response of the Confessing Church. For example, would God ordain a civil kingdom in which evil is imposed? If the civil or secular kingdom is also ordained to take up the sword, or use aggression while upholding its law, does that contradict the command to "love one's neighbour?" If God is a God of love, why would he ordain the use of the sword for such barbaric acts? One can see the depth of these questions in exploring the theology of the Confessing Church and its response to the Holocaust.

Karl Barth was very influential when it came to matters of theology for the Confessing Church. Probably few people have had a greater impact on theology in the twentieth century than he did. Barth was Reformed in his doctrinal approach. He embraced much of the Reformers' teachings

of the seventeenth century, particularly those of John Calvin. Barth did not see the Two Kingdoms the way Luther did. In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth states:

The regard paid to the will of God the hearing of the command of the one God as the King of Israel but also the King of the cosmos, includes man's obedience in this direction too. As there is no gap in God's action, as He neither neglects nor forgets His creature in acting towards him as Saviour, but actively remembers him, so there should be no gap in man's activity, but he must actively remember for his part that he is summoned to be present as man in co-operation in the service of the Christian community. Again, as the active recollection of both aspects cannot involve any cleavage or dualism or double kingdom in God's action, since the meaning and purpose of the rule of His fatherly providence are simply the coming of His one kingdom on earth, so the active recollection of man's twofold determination as a Christian and a man cannot divide his activity into two separate spheres under two different laws, since he has to exist as a man in order to be a Christian (2010:517-518).

The Confessing Church consisted of Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches which had some variation theologically to distinguish them. They agreed on, and many signed the Theological Declaration of Barmen. The leaders of the Confessing Church looked to Barth for guidance in these matters. The Two Kingdoms did not explicitly come up in the Barmen, but many areas certainly implied a break from the traditional thought that the state had sovereign control in matters of government. Each section of the Barmen implies that the Confessing Church rejects any secular teaching such as the state having authority in place of God's revealed word.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was not a proponent of the Two Kingdoms or Two Spheres theology. This is interesting since he was one of the leading German Lutheran theologians at the time. Bonhoeffer's decision to be more aggressive in his response to the Holocaust may have been influenced by his view of ethics and the Two Kingdoms or even his own conscience as was mentioned previously. In a compilation of his writings on ethics, which he hoped one day would be a completed project, he explains his views on ethics and the "Two Spheres."

As soon as we try to advance along this path, our way is blocked by colossal obstacle of a large part of traditional Christian ethical thought. Since the beginnings of Christian ethics after the times of the New Testament the main underlying conception in ethical thought, and the one which consciously or unconsciously has determined its whole course, has been the conception of a juxtaposition and conflict of two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural and un-Christian. This view becomes dominant for the first time in the Middle Ages, and for the second time in the pseudo-Protestant thought of the period after the Reformation. Reality as a whole now falls into two parts, and the concern of ethics is with the proper relation of these two parts to each other. In the scholastic scheme of things, the realm of the natural is made subordinate to the realm of grace; in the pseudo-Lutheran scheme the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in

opposition to the law of Christ, and in scheme of Enthusiasts, the congregation of the Elect takes up the struggle with a hostile world for the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth (1995:193-194).

Bonhoeffer is not thought of in the twenty-first century as being solely a theologian, but in Nazi Germany he was a leading academic figure and progressive resistor. He was not as well known or as popular as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, but he has eclipsed them in popularity now by virtue of his untimely death. Bonhoeffer was hanged before he was 40. His work on ethics is part of a larger thought process. It was apparent in these pieces that that have been preserved, he did not hold to traditional Lutheran views on the Two Kingdoms or Two Spheres. He continues the previous thought by explaining:

So long as Christ and the world are conceived as two opposing and mutually repellent spheres, man will be left in the following dilemma: he abandons reality as a whole, and places himself in one or other of the two spheres. He seeks Christ without the world, or he seeks the world without Christ. In either case he is deceiving himself. Or else he stands in both spaces, at once and thereby becomes the man of eternal conflict, the kind of man who has emerged in the period after the Reformation and which has repeatedly set himself up as the only form of Christian existence which is in accord with reality (194).

For Bonhoeffer there was only one sphere, but there were four mandates. The four mandates are developed later in this chapter. Here the clarity of the Two Kingdoms is in question. If one holds to the Romans 13:1-7 text which commands obedience to the government as it is ordained by God, it forces another question. Is the command of Paul for unconditional obedience? What response is commanded when a government goes rogue and seemingly violates other commands of God? In Acts chapter 5 one sees a compelling argument in response to the latter question. Peter and the Apostles had been forbidden to teach about Jesus in the public square. In disobedience to the authorities, they continued to witness to what they had seen and heard with Christ. They were brought before the High Council and the High Priest and questioned about their disobedience. The following is an account of Peter's response.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (ESVUK).

Here it is not explicitly stated as a command that obeying God requires disobeying the authorities; however, one can deduce that Luke's point in recording this was to demonstrate the

importance of placing God's commands above all others. This may be the tension that Bonhoeffer is suggesting by standing in both spheres. For Bonhoeffer, there was no question about what to do. He faced an ethical dilemma by being involved in the assassination plot on Hitler (Valkyrie), which ultimately is what cost him his life. Bonhoeffer believed there was no other alternative for this situation. This reveals his concern with situational ethics. Many Christians or biblical ethicists likely do not adhere to situational ethics. To Christians the primary ethic is what is found in God's commands. The Divine Command Theory reveals the primary ethics for Christians so that they will know the difference between right orthopraxis and wrong orthopraxis. That is exactly what Peter and the other Apostles were stating to the council and the high priests. Peter responded to the council "We must obey God rather than men."

Bonhoeffer was in the group of Confessing Church members that took a more progressive resistance. This may have been influenced by how he viewed the Two Spheres and his position on mandates. Everything, according to Bonhoeffer, is to be viewed through the lens of Christ. This is revealed in his statement:

It may be difficult to break the spell of this thinking in terms of two spheres, but it is nevertheless quite certain that it is in profound contradiction to the thought of the Bible and to the thought of the Reformation, and that consequently it aims wide of reality. There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world. The reality of Christ comprises the reality of the world within itself. The world has no reality of its own, independently of the revelation of God in Christ. One is denying the revelation of God in Jesus Christ if one tries to be "Christian" without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ. There are, therefore, not two spheres, but only one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united. Thus, the theme of the two spheres, which has become the dominant factor in the history of the Church, is foreign to the New Testament. The New Testament is concerned solely with the manner in which the reality of Christ assumes reality in the present world, which it has already encompassed, seized and possessed. There are not two spheres, standing side by side, competing with each other and attacking each other's frontiers. If that were so, this frontier dispute would always be the decisive problem of history. But the whole reality of the world is already drawn in into Christ and bound together in Him, and the movement of history consists solely in divergence and convergence in relation to the centre (Bonhoeffer, 1995:195).

Bonhoeffer believed that Luther was attempting "polemical unity" with his doctrine of the Two Kingdoms. Bonhoeffer had certainly read the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians with his understanding of Christ being the centre of all things. The one area that Bonhoeffer is not clear on is whether God instituted civil government for sovereign secular order. Christ is pre-eminent

in all things according to Bonhoeffer, but how does government fit into the spiritual order of all things? This is how his categorization of the mandates packages the spiritual and the secular.

Bonhoeffer suggested there are four “mandates” that stand in place of the two spheres or kingdoms. He begins by defining a mandate.

By the term mandate we understand the concrete divine commission which has its foundation in the revelation of Christ, and which is evidenced by Scripture; it is the legitimation and warrant for the execution of a definite divine commandment, the conferment of divine authority on an earthly agent. The term mandate must also be taken to imply the claiming, the seizure and the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment. The bearer of the mandate acts as a deputy in the place of Him who assigns him as commission (Bonhoeffer, 1995:283-283).

Bonhoeffer could not envision a world where one could step from a secular sphere into a spiritual sphere or step from a spiritual sphere into a secular. Everything, in his view, revolves around Jesus Christ or was Christocentric (John 1:10; Col. 1:16). He remarks, “the world is relative to Christ no matter whether it knows it or not” (Bonhoeffer: 204). Bonhoeffer saw the mandates of *labour*, *marriage*, *government*, and the *church* (Bonhoeffer: 204). These mandates according to Bonhoeffer are for all people; there is no distinction from secular to spiritual. All four are spiritual in nature and of divine order. Each of these mandates are to be done for Christ alone. The person who labours, labours for Christ. He cites Genesis 2:15 where man is commanded to tend and keep the garden. The one who marries enjoys the blessing of God’s divine order found in Genesis 2:20-25. Paul makes the case that the marriage between a husband and a wife is an imprint of Christ’s relationship to the church in Ephesians 5. The third mandate of government, Bonhoeffer clarifies, only preserves what has been created, it has no ability to create on its own, so it is therefore only maintaining what has been established by the creator. The fourth and final mandate is the Church. The Church is for communicating salvation to the world. It is through the Church that Jesus becomes a reality and is exposed through preaching and teaching. The correlation among the four mandates is interpreted by Bonhoeffer in the following:

Man is at the same time labourer, a partner in marriage, and the subject of a government. No division into separate spheres or spaces is permissible here. The whole man stands before the whole earthly and eternal reality, the reality which God has prepared for him in Jesus Christ. Man can live up to this reality only if he responds fully to the totality of the offer and the claim (Bonhoeffer: 208).

Bonhoeffer's mandates offer a compelling arrangement and alternative to the Two Kingdoms theology. The challenge for the Confessing Church and other Protestants was not to find an alternative, but to develop a biblical approach for resistance. The Barmen Declaration was initially the biblical answer for the Confessing Church. Unfortunately, Bonhoeffer did not have an opportunity to develop this thought process completely due to his imprisonment and execution. The importance of Bonhoeffer cannot be understated. Yes his ethics and theology may not have been as fully developed as some since his life was prematurely ended, but the influence and impact on German society and culture continued. Wolfgang Huber who is well versed on Bonhoeffer expresses the extent of Bonhoeffer's influence on society and culture with the following statement:

In West-Germany, Bonhoeffer's example was from time to time used in the context of civil disobedience as a means of political demonstration on moral grounds. That contributed to a perspective that even gained additional importance in the third, the united Germany. Now Bonhoeffer's actual contributions to an ethic of responsibility play the central role in the reception of his public ethics. Not an assumed heroism of our actions, but the question of how a future generation can live, that is decisive. This is shown in our days by the contrast between global poverty on the one hand and the irrationalities of global financial markets on the other, or by the great challenges of climate change, demographic development, and new forms of collective and individual violence. It is to the credit of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Lectures on both sides of the Atlantic that they took up many of those new issues and perspectives (Huber, 2010: 7).

7.2.1 Kingdom of God

When one is trying to understand this idea of Two Kingdoms and how it relates to the Confessing Church's response, one must begin with the kingdom of God. What was the kingdom of God or the spiritual kingdom? George Ladd describes the kingdom of God:

The kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God, and, derivatively, the sphere in which the rule is experienced. In biblical idiom, the kingdom is not identified with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it. The church is the community of the kingdom but never the kingdom itself. Jesus' disciples belong to the kingdom as the kingdom belongs to them; but they are not the kingdom. The kingdom is the rule of God. The church is the society of men (1974:11).

In this definition one finds a clear distinction between the Kingdom and the Church. The Church will be mentioned in the paragraphs that follow. Here the emphasis of the Kingdom is the place where there is dynamic rule or rule by a king. The emphasis, Ladd comments, is not about the kingdom but on the king. Another commentator remarks on Jesus's view of the kingdom:

To him the kingdom exists there, where not merely God is supreme, for that is true at all times and under all circumstances, but where God supernaturally carries through his supremacy against all opposing powers and brings men to the willing recognition of the same (Geerhardus Vos, 1958:50).

The kingdom was a means whereby God carried out His redemption of mankind while providing a place of refuge from the opposing forces of evil in the world. God's Kingdom is one where salvation is fulfilled and God rules supremely.

7.2.2 The Spiritual Kingdom

Typically, one thinks of a kingdom in geographical or physical terms. While there may be an element to God's Kingdom which may be physical, there is also a strong spiritual presence. The Confessing Church was a spiritual presence of the Kingdom of God. The physical aspect of the Kingdom of God is the future. The Bible describes a time when there will be a new Heaven and a new Earth. Neither of these is supremely ruled by anyone other than God (Rev. 21:1-2). John "saw a new heaven and a new earth" and continues explaining that the former or first heaven and earth had passed away.

7.2.3 The Church

Who are the subjects of this spiritual kingdom? Who are the inhabitants of this kingdom? Why were these Confessing Christians referred to as a church? These questions are significant for one who is clarifying the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust. The doctrine of the church is of great significance when analysing the response of the Confessing Church to the Holocaust. The Stuttgart Confession revealed a level of responsibility the Confessing Church had with a lack of resistance or response to the Nazis. If by natural law or a secular kingdom the burden of restraining evil was on the government, then the Confessing Church had no responsibility for the Holocaust. That may be the reason for the lack of response. If Luther's idea of two kingdoms permeated the German Protestants, this seems reasonable as to why there was a lack of response. The other matter was that the nationalist pride was so strong in the Confessing Church that that any form of resistance would have appeared anti-German.

One must begin with defining the church and its responsibilities to understand if there should have been a response of guilt. One theologian defines the church as, "the community of all true believers for all time" (Grudem, 1994:853). Like Grudem, John Frame offers a similar definition but expands on it where it identifies particularly with the Confessing Church. He observes:

What is the church? Essentially the church is the people of God in all ages. Notice the church is people, not buildings although it is right that the people have buildings in which to meet...The church is not, however, just any people. It is the people in covenant with God, through Jesus Christ. In one sense, the church is the elect, those joined to Christ in eternity past and through eternity future. In another sense, it is the people who sincerely or insincerely have identified themselves with God's people by profession and baptism (2013:1019).

Frame's observation highlights three significant qualifiers. Firstly, he observes that it is the elect people of God; the people that God predestined to adoption (Eph. 1:5). Romans 8:33 refers to the elect or the chosen of God. There have been many debates among scholars over what exactly the scriptures allude to here. Frame comments that it is the people who are in covenant with God, not a cathedral or a synagogue; it is a community of worshippers. This community can be anywhere the people are who honour and worship God. This is the community previously mentioned in Matthew 16:18. Those who are part of this are baptized (immersed in water) to identify them with the community of believers, the church.

This is where the Confessing Church was directly affected by the Nuremberg Laws. The laws passed on 15 September 1935 called for the removal of all non-Aryans from civil service, which included state-sponsored churches. The Confessing Church members resisted these laws and stated that converted Jews who had been baptized should be defined by their baptism into the Christian faith. They submitted it was not race or culture that defined them but baptism. The Confessing Church was resisting the Reich over their autonomy. They stated this in the Theological Declaration of Barmen. There was no mention of the Jews, but there were obvious remarks concerning the interference of the state in church matters. The Two Kingdoms Theology directly affects one's response to the separation of church and state debate.

7.2.4 Secular kingdom

The secular kingdom is that realm or sphere of the government or civil authority. For our purposes the civil authority is the Nazi regime. The struggle in the German Church was about how much of a role the government (Nazis) should play in church affairs. How one views the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms greatly affects their understanding of this question. If one sees the government and all its actions as ordained by God, one will submit to that authority. One may say that Romans 13 requires strict obedience to this sphere because God has endorsed it, but if it operates under only natural law without the influence of God's Spirit, it is reasonable to assume at some point it could contradict the law of God. The Nazis did enforce laws that contradicted the law of God. Here the Confessing Church and all Christians were faced with the question of obedience to Caesar or to God. As one author comments, "The church had to

choose between a Christ who was Lord over a shrinking spiritual sphere and a Christ who was Lord overall” (Lutzer, 2012:136). The Declaration of Barmen stated the Confessing Church’s response to whom it would obey. At the end of each article, these words were affirmed by the following: “We reject the false doctrine that there are realms of life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ, but to other masters, realms where we do not need to be justified and sanctified by Him” (Matheson, 1981:46).

In this context, loyalty to Germany meant loyalty to Adolf Hitler. Hitler was a propaganda master. In *Mein Kampf*, he wrote an entire chapter on propaganda that even today in the wrong hands would result in deception and grave misleading. In the section on Propaganda and the Press, Hitler states:

It is not considered part of the purpose of this press to inspire its readers with the ideals which might help them to lift their minds above the sordid conditions of their daily lives; on the contrary, it panders to their lowest instincts. Among the lazy-minded and self-seeking sections of the masses this kind of speculation turns out lucrative (www.nationalists.org>quotes, accessed on 13 May 2019).

Here the point may be made that solely depending on natural law can lead to deception. The Third Reich was established and built off the principles found in *Mein Kampf* and rejected the notion of any other authority.

Hitler organized his leadership on the principles found in his book, even establishing a position of Minister of Propaganda. Joseph Goebbels was the Minister of Propaganda during the Nazi years. He was highly valued by Hitler and his work deceived most of the German people. The secular sphere of the government never looked so impressive as it did with Goebbels manipulation of the media outlets of the time, including the arts and cinema. One might ask what this has to do with theology and the Confessing Church. The response is everything! The deception of the secular kingdom is never stronger than when it operates independently of moral and ethical guidance.

7.2.5 Government

A government that operates independently of moral and ethical guidance is the antithesis of why God ordained government. The precedence for government is found in the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis 9 after Noah and his family exited the Ark. God tells Noah and his family that there will be “a reckoning” or “a payment” for the crime of murder (Grudem, 201:78-79). For the crime of murder God says in Genesis 9:5-6:

And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image (ESVUK).

This passage does not say anything about government specifically, but it institutes the system of recompense civilly for a specific crime. Here God says that if a person murders another person, they have forfeited their life. As God reinstitutes human society after destroying it, he establishes an expectation or a law to be enforced. This is the most severe punishment that can be given. It is important to note in this verse that God says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." The penalty is severe because *God made man in His image*. Every human life is to be valued because it was created in the image of God; the Latin term calls this *imago Dei*. More about the *imago Dei* will be mentioned in the next section. Here the emphasis is placed on God's command and the penalty for breaking that command in human society (78-79).

Is this relevant for the Confessing Church in the twentieth century? If one considers that this law was introduced before Israel became a nation in Genesis 12, the argument that it was only for Israel is eliminated. One must consider that God had just destroyed all life except those of Noah's family and the animals that were placed on the ark with Noah. The re-established society from that point forward would have a standard to live by. The Confessing Church was faced with whether this applied to the government also. The Nazis were violating this command through the concentration camps, the T-4 programme, the attempt to eliminate the European Jews, the attempt to eliminate other minority groups, and the senseless killing of millions of others. When a government or individuals operate independently of these moral and ethical guides, there should accountability. Who holds the government accountable? The Confessing Church based the Theological Declaration of Barmen on the understanding that the church was not the moral or ethical guidance in the church, God's Word as it was given in Jesus Christ was.

7.3 Imago Dei

Imago Dei is a Latin term that refers to "the image of God." In theological terms, what defines race? For the Confessing Church, race would have been defined by what the Bible says about the creation of man, not the Nazis. One does not have to go far in the Bible to see what it says about man. Genesis gives the account of the creation of man. Genesis 1 describes the account of the creation of man.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and

over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (ESVUK).

There is a significant thought in this passage of scripture for the Confessing Church since the Bible was the standard by which they were going to evaluate the Nazi laws. Here one sees that man was created in the image of God. Expanding on this idea, "The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God" (Grudem, 1994:442). It is important to note that there is no cultural distinction here to define "man." The term is used generally of human beings. One might better question if gender is specified here, but that is insignificant for this project. This study focuses on what would have influenced the Confessing Church from a racial perspective not a question of gender. The focus is really on who is made in the image of God. Do the Jews have a claim to that right or is it only for the Aryan people and what is considered Aryan?

Since Barth was the primary author of the Theological Declaration of Barmen, it is wise to consider his influence and thoughts on the Confessing Church in theological matters. Barth was of the Reformed traditions of Luther and Calvin in some areas of theology. Regarding *imago Dei* however, he differed (443). The Reformers held to a view described as substantive view. This view holds that a specific quality such as reason was conferred on humans bearing the image of God. Barth saw this differently. He believed that bearing the image of God was more of a relational quality. He and his Swiss theological opponent Emil Brunner believed that the image of God was found in the male and female being. They saw the image of God being an interpersonal quality (Ericksen, 1998:498-510). This certainly does not mean that the Confessing Church took this stance, but it is possible that this doctrine affected the other doctrinal areas that were mentioned in the Barmen.

The Confessing Church relied heavily upon his theological understanding of the doctrines or dogma that the Confessing Church had to consider. Barth's understanding of the *imago Dei* most assuredly influenced his writing. He writes in *Church Dogmatics* about the value of human life as it relates to the image of God:

The explicit biblical form of the command is the "Thou shalt not kill" of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:20, Deuteronomy 5:17), which even in the New Testament is often referred to as one of the great commandments of clearly expressed in this formula. Human life must be considered as given by God for a specific purpose and set under His special protection, and therefore it must be treated with holy awe. We may note already the clear-cut reason for this command of God in Gen. 9:6: 'For in the image of God made He man.' Both in form and sense this Old Testament command is impressive by reason of the very

fact that it has a purely negative and therefore a purely defensive character. Man may not be the murderer of man. Respect for life is thus described from the opposite pole (Barth, 1961:344).

Bonhoeffer's friend, student, and family member Eberhard Bethge, may be the closest link to understanding Bonhoeffer's progression of thoughts. Bethge kept close ties with Bonhoeffer while he served his days at Tegel prison. Bethge discusses the continuing burdens that Bonhoeffer carried:

Bonhoeffer could not ignore what was happening outside; the progress of the conspiracy for another Germany, the pointless loss of life on the front, which included so many brethren from Finkenwalde, and the fate of the Jews. This remained a hidden but real burden behind everything that made life at Tegel Bearable (Bethge, 2000: 853).

One might question parts of Bonhoeffer's theology and ethic, but there was no question about his commitment and loyalty to his convictions. Bethge continues to share Bonhoeffer's thought by citing him as saying, "Concerning this no more could be said than this: 'As I see it, I am here for some purpose, and I only hope I may fulfil it'" (Bonhoeffer, 1997: 289). Furthermore, Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson in the edition of *A Testament To Freedom*, comment, "The oppressed whom he gave his life to liberate seem to represent for Bonhoeffer the principal answer to his question from Tegel prison in 1944: 'Who really is Jesus Christ for us today?'" (Kelly and Nelson, 1995: xiv-xv.)

There are certainly some points other theologians would see differently from Barth. The reversal of the question would be how humans respond when they unjustly take the life of other men or women? Barth's point is well taken that being made in the image of God, no matter the basis for the act, should be taken seriously. Barth also emphasizes obedience to God rather than humans as cited in Acts 10:29. He may have gravitated to the more pacifist view, but certainly understood later that the mistreatment of the Jews as a serious misfortune against God's chosen or elected people.

There is great significance in this doctrine for the Confessing Church. It influenced how they viewed Hitler, the Jews, and the German Christians. To view one as being created in the image of God equally would mean that there is no racial distinction; each person was created equally in respect to other human beings. Even though this image was distorted in what is referred to as "The Fall" in Genesis chapter three where Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, each person is equal in creation and original sin. Salvation history is about the redemption of this image reclaimed in the people of God.

7.4 Dialectical Theology

Possibly Barth confused the doctrine of *imago Dei* with his Dialectical Theology. Many of the Confessing Church members were Reformed and held to the traditional Reformed confessions. One doctrine that is associated with Barth's view of salvation is the doctrine of election. Barth believed in what has been called double predestination. Essentially this means that God chose some for salvation and chose some for damnation. In his view God was responsible solely for this choice based on his divine will. Barth also was Christo-centric and ascribed that Jesus was the embodiment of God, choosing the elect of man while also electing all people to God in Himself. This has been criticized as a contradiction and leads to what is called universalism. Universalism is the idea that all people will be saved, regardless of confession or how they practice faith. How can one believe that God elects some for salvation and some for damnation and at the same time elects all people to be saved?

Barth reconciled this view to his critics using an understanding of God's grace. He was convinced that God's grace is a mystery that cannot be limited to man's understanding of salvation. Barth himself referring to universalism said, "Neither do I teach it, nor do I not teach it" (Woodbridge & James, 2013:713). With Barth's position as the primary draftsman and a board member of the Confessing Church, he was in a battle to preserve the God-centred theology that was not found among the German Christians. Barth's direct influence in the area of theology for the Confessing Church cannot be understated.

7.5 The Knowability of God

How does one come to know God? This is a question that was popular outside of the Holocaust and was the basis of the debate between Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. The debate mentioned in the previous chapter between the two theologians was a topic of great importance. Barth with his neo-orthodoxy believed that God was revealed through His Word. Barth believed that knowledge of and about God was solely found in the Bible. This knowledge of God contained faith and grace leading people to Jesus Christ. For Barth, this meant that any philosophical or theological system that taught anything contrary to the Word of God was pointless (1961:1-68).

Barth also rejected general revelation of God in creation by all people because they were created in His image (*imago Dei*). Barth saw this as a "second revelation" since God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ (Allison, 2011:206). Greg R. Allison comments on the debate between Emil Brunner and Barth by saying:

Barth angrily critiqued Brunner's view, asserting that it violates the key Protestant principles of sola Scriptura (Scripture Only) and sola gratia (grace only) and is at odds with Paul's statement that the natural man does not and cannot know the things of God (1Cor. 2:14) (Barth, 1946:67-128).

Instead Barth insisted on the knowledge of God coming through one source only: Jesus Christ (2011:206).

The early part of the twentieth century saw questions raised about the knowability of God in general. The main concern in this paper is with Barth and his influence on the Confessing Church, so it will not be profitable to discuss the other views that are not directly related to the Confessing Church or the Holocaust. Brunner, who was also well-known, held that humans had an innate ability within them to know something of God. This was a result of natural law where Barth said one cannot know God apart from His grace as it is revealed in His Word and through Jesus Christ.

What does the knowability of God have to do with the Confessing Church and the Holocaust? First, the theological basis for the Barmen Declaration was rooted in the Word of God. Barth, along with the Confessing Church members adhered to the idea that truth was not found in the government or natural man, but in God's Word and Jesus Christ. The Barmen Declaration explicitly states this by saying, "We reject the false doctrine that the Church could have permission to hand over the form of its message and of its order to whatever it itself might wish or to the vicissitudes of the prevailing ideological and political convictions of the day" (Barmen Declaration, 1934). Secondly, the knowability of God could be influenced by another Reformation doctrine called Total Depravity. Could a depraved man or woman know God without His assistance and grace? Barth said, "*Nein* (no)"! This raises another question, if many Germans during the years 1933-45 professed to be Christians, could more have been done on their part to avert evil? If Brunner is right and there is some natural element that people possess to know God, should not that same ability exist to deter these evil deeds? Thirdly, knowing God through His Word and Jesus Christ gives one a standard or a measure of what is right and wrong. The Confessing Church put forth a document that recognized both God's Word and Jesus as the only source of true knowledge for the world and the church. All three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) record two important commands from Jesus: love God and love your neighbour (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). One can assume by this command that loving God means also to love His children. Initially the Aryan Paragraph was a source of contention of the Confessing Church, but it appears to have conceded to the Nazi ideology and the nationalists pride due to the lack of aggressive resistance.

The next sub-category of theological influence builds on the knowability of God. How one comes to know God can be connected to the altering of the conscience. Paul said that if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). With the idea of new or different comes a new way of thinking. Paul references a war that is this taking place with “the law of my mind”. (Rom. 7:23) Paul comments on the mind several more times in the New Testament. With these references it can be implied that with knowing God and Jesus Christ, there will be an influence on the mind and the conscience. How much can intermittent sin sear the conscience?

7.6 The Conscience

The knowledge of right and wrong is the basis of ethics. It is also the basis of Christian life. The ability to know right from wrong can influence how one behaves in society. It is the source of conviction by which one makes decisions. People instinctively make decisions every day. The ability to do this instinctively is influenced by a balance of internal and external sources. What are those sources? The Apostle Paul states in Romans 2:14,” For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law” (ESVUK). The word *physis* which is a transliteration can be defined as “nature, native and instinct” (The New Analytical Greek Lexicon, 1990:434). Where did this natural sense of right and wrong come from? Paul cites two places that influenced these senses, the law and a natural sense. There is a balance of the cultural, religious, social, political and ethical influences.

Based on the lack of response by the Confessing Church as a whole, it is reasonable to question the influence of their consciences. As stated in the Barmen Declaration, the authoritative Word of God revealed through the Bible should have been the major influence in their decision making and response to events and the Nazis. The consciences of the Confessing Church members deserve a closer examination. One must have a complete understanding of how the conscience works in general. To gain a better understanding of how the conscience works, another definition of conscience is offered: “Subjective awareness of the moral quality of one’s actions as indicated by the moral values to which one subscribes” (Pestana, 2005:308). The conscience falls into the category of personal ethics and the moral values that one ascribes to.

Using Paul’s reference to the law (Bible) and nature, while combining that with Pestana’s definition, one can say that the Confessing Church should have been conscientious about what the Bible said and how it influenced their response. The Bible denotes obeying God rather than

the Nazis (Acts 5:29), loving one's neighbour (Matthew 22:39), and take care of those in need (Luke 10:33). Looking back into the theological and ethical history of conscience and how it relates to the subject, the following statement is posited:

In their commentaries on St. Jerome's exegesis of scripture, Philip the Chancellor, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas Aquinas developed an analysis of conscience that made explicit several crucial distinctions. Awareness of the moral quality of one's own actions involves two aspects: first, the awareness of an act, and second, the awareness of one's values as exemplified (or not) by the act. This general knowledge of one's own values was distinguished by medieval moral theologians from conscience proper, "Conscience" itself was regarded as the activity of one's mind in bringing those values to bear upon one's own individual actions. It is thus a species of self-consciousness or a way of being aware of one-self (Pestana, 205:308-309).

The Confessing Church became aware of their actions, which is revealed by the Stuttgart Declaration. If this was the first awareness of their actions, it was beyond influence on the outcome of the Holocaust. Next is the awareness of the influences on one's actions. Here it is easy for one to consider the Barmen Declaration and say they were influenced by the Divine Commands. One must remember they acknowledged they did not act as they had wished. So, what was it that influenced the Confessing Church members to "be silent" as a form of action? The Barmen Declaration stated their hopeful stance against the Nazis and how they wanted to respond, not how they did respond, which is evidenced but the Stuttgart Declaration.

There are some influences one must consider when examining the actions of the Confessing Church members regarding conscience. One is how they were raised. Many were raised as Lutheran, Reformed, or United church members. Their parents held to certain traditions and beliefs when raising their children. Most of those in the Protestant church would have known catechisms such as the Augsburg Confession which was a leading Confession in the Lutheran Church. As children they would have been encouraged to learn Bible verses and certain doctrines while practicing the sacraments. For most children this is done during their developmental years which one can trust that there were intentional and unintentional influences that would help in decision making for the rest of their lives. Therefore, the Barmen Declaration proved to be a seminal document for this reason. It was to be a guiding document, based on biblical principles for the Confessing Church to be guided by. The difference is that these men were much older and probably beyond their developmental learning years. At this point, the study would need clinical assessments to develop this thought which is well beyond the scope of this research. It does give some insight to consider why the conscience of the Confessing Christians should have been altered.

The second and almost conflicting influence is that of their parents' political and social ideologies. It is true that a genuine faith should guide all thought processes and moral judgments based on 1 Corinthians 10:31, where Paul says that everything is to be done with God's glory in view. The National Socialist movement began as a response to the humiliation that many Germans faced after the First World War. The Weimar Republic appeared to be a political and economic failure. It is reasonable to believe that many Germans, including Protestant and Catholic Christians, sought a restored Germany, free of military, financial, economic, political, and international defeat. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's father Karl was a well-known psychiatrist and was remembered for having strong political views. Interestingly, he was opposed to Adolf Hitler and his ideology, which could have influenced Dietrich to be as outspoken in his resistance (Bethge, 2000). One can assume that there was a significant segment of German society that supported or welcomed the changes proposed by Hitler, even though initial election results did not reflect overwhelming majorities (Bauer, 2001). Although the conclusion of the childrearing practices and influences in German culture is not exhaustive, there is some reason to believe it should be considered (Kren & Rappoport, 1994:31-32). There is a point in the adult life when a person becomes fully aware and responsible for their actions unless they are mentally incapable. Pestana comments, "The mature conscience of an adult involves applying values of which the individual is fully aware" (2005:309).

In the case of the Confessing Church, moral values should have been defined by the Bible as was referenced in previous chapters under the Divine Command Theory of ethics. Texts like The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:2-17 and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7, serve as Divine Commands that guide the moral value of Christians. Bonhoeffer was directly influenced by the Sermon on the Mount as revealed in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. He draws conclusions about moral values and outlines what it means to follow Christ by using the Sermon on the Mount. Bonhoeffer also compares cheap grace with costly grace: "cheap grace is grace without price: grace without cost and costly grace calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ" (1995: 43-45). To Bonhoeffer, costly grace was reflected by what a person was willing to give up or to do so that they could follow Christ.

The Apostle Paul refers to the battle that one can imagine the Confessing Church members having in Galatians 5:16-26. Paul compares walking by the flesh with walking by the Holy Spirit. Essentially Paul is defining moral value by what he refers to "the fruit of the Spirit" suggesting that when these behaviours are obeyed, it is consistent with how a follower of Christ should act.

The list is not dissimilar to the “Sermon on the Mount” that Bonhoeffer refers to. Paul states: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). These morals are reflective of biblical values that not every ethicists or moral agent recognizes. However, when a representative of an institution like the Confessing Church was of the universal church, they are expected to honour the defining biblical morals. In this situation the Nazis were able to dictate and influence what was considered right or acceptable. The consciences of the Confessing Church members like all the Christians in Germany were faced with a dilemma of honouring God’s Word or reaping the benefits of a strong nationalist Germany, even if it meant compromising certain commands found in the Bible.

The conscience also was evidenced by what has been referred to as complicity within the Confessing Church (Ericksen, 2012). If by complicit one means support of the atrocities committed or the evil committed, it will be difficult to assess the Confessing Christians as supporting the Nazis, but if by complicit one is referring to a silent resistance it may be easier to observe. The Confessing Church saw this with the evil that was prevalent at the end of the war. Many of the atrocities had been hidden from them in the beginning. For some it probably was also not something they were looking for, so it was not especially noticeable. This may have been the reason some were complicit with the Nazis. One tends to see what one wants to see. Victoria Barnett refers to these as *bystanders* (Barnett, 2000). They were morally neutral to what was happening. Barnett goes into more detail about the bystander and the implications of this word.

The bystander is not a protagonist, the person propelling the action; nor is the bystander the object of the action. In a criminal case, the bystander is neither victim nor perpetrator; his or her legally relevant role is that of witness - someone who happened to be present and could shed light on what actually occurred. But the implications of a word like ‘witness’ or ‘bystander’ are altered by human experience. A witness does not merely see something; a bystander is not just physically present. People are changed by what they see and do, and they are often moved to act. A definitive part of human experience is the way in which we react to outside circumstances: either involuntarily or deliberately (Barnett, 200:10).

Some Germans would say that they were not aware of what was happening. The Confessing Church certainly understood the potential evils from the changes that the Nazis and the German Christians were making in the church. Martin Niemöller saw first-hand what was happening with his confinement in the concentration camps for seven years. The lack of action in the

Confessing Church is what was concerning. The Stuttgart Confession was the Confessing Church's attempt at saying they were wrong in not acting. Bonhoeffer said in response to evil:

We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds: we have been drenched by many storms; we have learnt the arts of equivocation and pretence; experience has made us suspicious of others and kept us from being truthful and open; intolerable conflicts have worn us down and even made us cynical. Are we still of any use? (1943:16.)

This is an excerpt from a multipage letter that went out to friends and family on a New Year's Day. One can almost hear the frustration in his voice at the lack of response in the church. The word that stands out is "silent." How can one remain silent when they have witnessed an overwhelming display of evil? Next Bonhoeffer questions if the church is still valuable to society, "Are we still of any use?" (16). In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells His followers "you will be my witnesses." In a legal sense, a witness is called on to testify to what they have experienced. This testimony can be used by the prosecuting or defending. Either way it is expected that the witness will give clarification to what has happened. In a biblical sense, it is inconsistent with Acts 1:8 that a witness remains silent. In the case of the followers of Jesus, they had witnessed something wonderful. However, what Bonhoeffer is referring to is a witness to horrific evil deeds. In the case of the Confessing Church, many remained silent to the evils that were committed.

7.7 Anti-Semitism and racism in Germany

The Confessing Church took a strong stance on the issue of state and church relations. One area that was not addressed in the Barmen Declaration or in most statements from the Confessing Church was the treatment of the non-Aryan people in Germany, specifically the Jews. The term that was used to describe the feelings of the Nazis toward non-Aryans, who primarily were Jewish, was anti-Semitism. The term did not originate with the Holocaust, but certainly became more popular during events of the Holocaust. One brief definition sums up the ideology by saying, "Hostility and ill-feeling directed toward Jews" (Laskier, 2005:70). This falls under ethics regarding race and ethnicity (70).

Hatred of and prejudice against the Jews go much further back than the Holocaust. Its roots can be traced back to the Middle Ages in Europe during the early modern and modern eras (70). In postmodern terms, it is a form of racism. Is Judaism a race, a culture, or a religion? Biblically speaking, it is often referred to as a nation, a people of God, Israel, and sometimes simply Jews. There is no question that during the Holocaust they were looked at as a race by the Nazis (Heschel, 2008). Along with Heschel, one can ask why so many German Christians, including many in the Confessing Church did nothing to stop what was being done to the Jews. Suppose

the theologians and ministers of that time period were teaching that Jews were an inferior race of people. To Christians, it would not seem hard to begin to believe that with both church and government indoctrinating that into the people (Heschel, 2008:20-23).

7.7.1 Israel's Election

Barth like Bonhoeffer, viewed the harsh treatment of the Jews more seriously than others. What was the reason for Jewish existence and suffering? Barth considered God's providential plan for the Jews to be a significant study. The Apostle Paul wrote about God's election of Israel and Israel's rejection of God in Romans 9-11. Barth worked hard to understand this relationship between God and the Jews and how it related to the anti-Semitism during the Nazi-dominated years. Robert Willis has examined Barth's thoughts on the Jewish question. In Barth's understanding, after 70 C.E., the Jews rejection of God culminated in their rejection of Jesus. This rejection of Jesus of Nazareth led to his crucifixion. Willis implies Barth's thought is with the crucifixion of Jesus, the faithfulness of God is shown in the "crucifixion of a Jew-Jesus of Nazareth" (Barth, 1954:197). This served as a basis for a new beginning. With this in mind, the Jewish people could only be viewed accurately as a "sign of what the one true God has done for us all, in this one Jewish person" (Heschel, 2008:198).

Barth does not make light of the fact that the Jews are in many respects the chosen or elect of God. Barth tried to understand this connection with God for the Jews in salvation's history. What place do the Jews hold in the context of divine election and government is God's divine plan? Barth said:

What man is in light of the divine election and calling, how he is an object of the free grace of God, what is his relation to it and in what capacity he is judged by it- it is this whole shadow of the history of the covenant and salvation and its fulfilment which the Jews embody and reveal. Let it be understood not in spite of their election, but because of it, on the basis of it. It costs something to be the chosen people, and the Jews are paying the price (1951:219-220).

What exactly is salvation history? Concerning Israel and the church this is a complex question. Some people view the church as a continuation of the church. Millard Erickson comments on the relationship between Israel in the church from a twenty-first century perspective.

Some Reformed theologians see literal Israel as virtually swallowed up or displaced by the church or spiritual Israel. Nothing is left to be fulfilled in relationship to literal Israel; consequently, there is no need for a millennium in which Jews will be restored to a prominent place in God's work. On the other hand, dispensationalists regard Israel and the church as two eternally separate entities with which God deals in different ways (2013:965).

How to view Israel biblically is not a new issue or even one that surfaced during the Holocaust. The controversy is a biblical one that the Apostle Paul had to address on occasion (Rom. 8:28-29). When the gospel became available to the Gentiles, the question of circumcision had to be examined. The male Jews, prior to the Gentiles being evangelized, had to be circumcised to show that they were in covenant with God. Some, including Peter, questioned if the Gentiles had to be circumcised to follow Jesus. Paul even required Timothy, his understudy, to be circumcised before he went out to minister in Jewish areas with him. This was removing obstacles or barriers that were requirements for salvation.

Ericksen sums up his view on the relationship between Israel and the church.

The church then is the new Israel. It occupies the place in the new covenant that Israel occupied in the old. Whereas in the Old Testament the kingdom of God was peopled by national Israel, in the New Testament it is peopled by the church. There is a special future coming for national Israel, however, through large-scale conversion to Christ and entry into the church (2013:966).

That is not necessarily the view of this author, however it is important understand the question more clearly of how Israel is viewed in salvation history and to try to understand how the Confessing Church viewed Israel. It appears that Barth and Bonhoeffer were more sympathetic to what part the Jews played in salvation history than most. It is still puzzling why Barth did not include specific details about the removal of the converted Jews from positions of leadership in the Protestant church due to the Aryan Paragraph in the Barmen Declaration.

Barth saw the existence of Israel in both a positive and negative light in the history of salvation. According to Barth, the Jews were a constant reminder of the rejection and disobedience of people to God. However, they also were a reminder of God's grace and faithfulness toward man. More specifically, the church was a constant reminder of God's electing grace. Barth said, "An ontological impossibility, a wound, a gaping hole in the body of Christ, something which is quite intolerable" (1951:671). Barth considered Judaism as an important part of biblical history and states: "the root form from which it has itself sprung." (878) Barth saw Israel as a historic and indispensable part of salvation history. Unfortunately, Barth also saw the unfortunate remembrance of the Jews rejecting the Messiah, one of their own, Jesus. All this history hinged on the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.

Barth saw anti-Semitism as unbelief, not an issue of race (Barth, 1951:219). He also believed that Israel's rejection of their Messiah was not necessarily being elect, but the elect refusing their election (Willis, 1998:353). This seems unlikely if one believes in *irresistible grace*. This doctrine implies that one cannot simply walk away from election for salvation. The counter

argument to that is *free-will*. This will not be resolved in this paper since it has been a source of contention since the Reformation and will most likely always be a source of disagreement among theologians. Regarding Israel for the purpose of this paper, Barth was not willing to discard the Jews like many were. To him there was still value since they were the chosen of God. In *Church Dogmatics*, Barth states:

It is not in vain that they are a people ordained as bearers of light and salvation to all nations. It is not in vain that they are the holy remnant of Israel. It is not in vain that they are the human servant of God. It is not in vain that they are people of the Jew Jesus of Nazareth who died on Golgotha laden with their sin and the sin of the whole world. It is not in vain that they are represented by this One. What man is in the light of divine election and calling, how he is an object of the free grace of God, what is his relation to it and in what capacity he is judged by it— it is this whole shadow of the history of the covenant of salvation and its fulfilment which the Jews embody and reveal (Barth, 1951:219).

From this statement it emerges that Barth, the Swiss theologian did not share the same sentiments as the general German populace. If the Confessing Church members had viewed the Jews in the same light as Barth, there may have been more of an effort to avert the maltreatment of them. Why Barth did not include some of these sentiments in the Barmen Declaration is unknown. It is possible that he knew that many of the Confessing churchmen did not hold the same view, and it may have been pointless to attempt to insert it in the document. Also, it is possible that Barth wanted the document to remain true through time and culture without specific designations for historical periods. Whatever the reason, it was not inserted in the Barmen Declaration. Would it have made a difference in the resistance or response? No one can answer that so far removed from the events. The other consideration is that it certainly would not have hurt to have inserted specifics like this. The response was inadequate as it was; one is only left with the question of “what if...”?

7.8 Public Theology

Would the right kind of interchange or discussion between Confessing Church leaders and society, or members of society, have prevented the Holocaust? In the context of the Holocaust there appears to have been no open dialogue for the Confessing Church with the Nazis (State) or society. The one meeting Hitler had with church leaders was not productive and it was certainly not open. It resulted in more frustration among church leaders, especially the Confessing Church leaders. This was a Totalitarian Dictatorship, by means of which Hitler controlled both society and the State. What would an open dialogue look like for the Confessing Church and society? Would it have promoted resistance? One needs to understand this area of

discipline before it can be evaluated as a successful method of positive resistance. The Confessing Church pastors had already demonstrated they had access to one of the most recognized theologians of the period, but how was that translating into the everyday ministry of those pastors? It is imperative that pastors take on the role of influential theologian in the public square if the church is to thwart future exploitations of minorities.

Christianity's moral influence in the public square deserves further consideration for the church to be proactive against social injustices. Public Theology is a term that is gaining marginal momentum among theologians and scholars. It is so recent that in fact there is a need for more research and writing on the subject. What exactly is Public theology? A working definition may be offered here: Public theology is practised by a Christian, who is representative of the church involved in an open dialogue with society. The emphasis may be placed here on with society. This is a two-way action, where conversation is a conduit between the two (Day & Kim, 2017: 1-21). This also involves a presentation of Christian influence where it can be examined and questioned by a public forum (Forrester, 2004:6).

Another development will help to further understand this vague area of theology and help to better understand its place in the implications or lessons to be learned from the Holocaust. E Harold Breitenberg Jr. helps one to understand a bit more of how Public theology is to be viewed. Breitenberg attributes much of the work on Public Theology to Max Stackhouse, the distinguished Princeton professor. Breitenberg states, "What do we mean by Public theology?" (2010:2). One thing that separates this discipline from others is the focus on social justice. This might arguably be non-related to the Holocaust by those who deny that the Holocaust was authentic in the way it is understood today. Regardless of those who are in denial, the overwhelming information documented is that there was social injustice and there were not extensively organized attempts at resistance or to hold the State and society accountable for the injustices against the Jews as well as the other minority groups. Breitenberg comments on Max Stackhouse's focus on Public theology by saying:

Concerns for social justice and the proper ordering of society lead inexorably to the conclusion that Christians have to act responsibly in and for the societies of which they are a part. This is reinforced as well by the theological convictions of the Reformed Protestant traditions, which view human work and social engagement as vocational opportunities for believer's willing and creative response to God's grace. A focus on Christian responsibility for and within society has been central to Max's understanding of Christian ethics from his earliest work and remains key to understanding his most recent work as well (xiv).

In defining Public theology, there are some key components that separate it from other disciplines within theology.

1. Public theology is theologically informed discourse that seeks to be understandable both to those within its own religious traditions and to those outside it.
2. Public theology is concerned with issues, institutions, interactions and processes that are of importance and pertinence both to the church or other religious communities and to larger society, including those of the same religious tradition, those of other faiths, and those who claim no religious beliefs and maintain no formal religious ties.
3. Public theology draws on and makes use of sources of insight, terminology, and forms of discourse and argument that are in theory available and open to all, in addition to ones that are explicitly religious and specific to the religious tradition in which it speaks.
4. Public theology is theologically informed descriptive and normative public discourse about public issues, institutions, and interactions, addressed to the church or other religious body as well as the larger public or publics, and argued in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria.
5. Public theology is theologically informed discourse, its warrants and method of argument are not restricted to those that are specifically religious, such as Scripture and church teachings (Breitenberg, 2010:2-4).

The term has been associated with civil religion by some. The two were usually considered in the same conversations until Public theology began to take its own form. Public theology became popular in fields of study such as church history, theological ethics, and theology in general (Hainsworth & Paeth, 2010:4-5). Civil religion is more associated with the country specific as revealed in the title of Robert Bellah's work, which popularized the term, "Civil Religion in America". (5) Along with Bellah, Martin Marty popularized the term Public theology in conversation about Bellah's essay on civil religion. According to Bellah, Americans have some religious commonalities that are unique to society, but not Christian. Public theology involves a defined church but is engaged in dialogue with society and is subject to scrutiny. The discipline of Public theology deserves a continuation of scholarly attention, and here it is introduced because of its potential value in preventing injustice, like that of the Holocaust. The Confessing Church leadership did many good and biblical things.

There is an area of concern for the Protestant or Evangelical with the Public theology from this view. The "Social Gospel Movement" that was introduced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is one whereby the emphasis was placed on humanitarian work and political engagement without evangelism or sharing the knowledge of Jesus Christ with those engaged.

Wayne Grudem identifies the areas of focus that are engaged in the Social Gospel Movement as “poverty, slums, crime, racial, discrimination and other social evils” (2010:53). Probably a few well-meaning people would say that one should not have compassion for those areas of society. The argument against the Social Gospel is that it is a temporary solution to an eternal moral problem. The whole of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament, commands Christians to be witnesses as to who Jesus is and to make disciples for Him (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Can that be done without evangelism and helping someone’s social condition? That is a worthwhile question for proponents of the Social Gospel (53). Grudem continues by commenting:

These were good causes themselves, but this movement placed little emphasis on the need for individuals to place personal trust in Christ as Saviour or the need to proclaim the entire Bible as the Word of God and worthy of our belief. The Social Gospel movement gained followers primarily among liberal Protestants rather than among more conservative, Evangelical Protestant groups (Grudem, 2010:53).

Is it possible to do both? Does sharing the news of Christ with others make a difference in society and politics? Would sharing Christ have made a difference in the Holocaust, if the Confessing Church had been more focused on that? Much of the research and writing that has been done on the Confessing Church discusses the biblical position of the Confessing Church but does not specifically examine the possibility of evangelism within the Nazi government or society. Possibly this is because many of the Nazis professed to be Christians as well as a majority of Germans during the years of 1933-1945 which has already been mentioned in this paper (Bergen, 2009).

Historians and theologians may differ on their views of the Social Gospel Movement, but a new emphasis with new perspectives may warrant consideration for sceptics. One Christian History text remarks:

Critics fear that the concern for social justice is a revival of the early twentieth-century Social Gospel Movement of Walter Rauschenbusch, but for the most part such criticism has fallen on deaf ears. Far from embracing the Protestant liberalism of Rauschenbusch, postmodern evangelicals see themselves as actively living out the gospel, perhaps with more consistency than their forebears. Abandoning the left-right dichotomy, they believe Jesus exemplifies a generous orthodoxy joined with a generous orthopraxis (James & Woodbridge, 2013: 815-816).

Public theology is not to be confused solely with the Social Gospel Movement, but it appears to share some common traits with it. With both, there appears to be a desire to not overly emphasize the Christian position when considering social justice. It was not clear with the Confessing Church members whether there were intentional attempts made at converting or re-

asserting the gospel of Jesus Christ to Nazi leadership or Reich leadership. Dietrich Bonhoeffer may have been the closest proponent of a Public theologian with his desire to build community among believers and to relate to those who were being oppressed, primarily the Jews. Bonhoeffer's exposure to the United States, Union Seminary, and the community churches in Harlem appears to have opened up his understanding of the gospel. It can be argued that much of what he experienced with the social climate of the United States had a lasting influence on his life and ministry (Bethge, 2000). Bonhoeffer saw a great need for a renewed focus on the Word of God after experiencing social, economic, and political conditions of America as well as Germany. One can hear his passion in his letter to H. Rössler with the following statement by Bonhoeffer:

My stay in America...made one thing clear to me: the absolute necessity of working together and at the same time the inexplicable conflict that appears to make such unity seem impossible. From the perspective over there, our situation and theology appear so localized, and I just can't understand how, in the entire world, Germany and a few men over there should have grasped what the gospel is. And yet I don't see a message anywhere else (Bonhoeffer, 1931).

Bonhoeffer was impassioned by the gospel and desired that it would be the bridge between societal ills and the church. It became clearer later with his writings such as *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Ethics*, which was incomplete, that he was burdened by the condition of the church and more specifically his native country. Bonhoeffer was impassioned about the gospel and the opportunity to share it but there were obvious concerns about his country. This apparent in the following statement by him.

What really lies behind the lament about the lack of civil courage? In these years we have encountered much bravery and self-sacrifice but civil courage almost nowhere, even among ourselves. Only an altogether naïve psychology would trace this deficiency back simply to personal cowardice. The reasons behind this are quite different. In the course of a long history, we Germans have had to learn the need for obedience and the power of. We saw the meaning of greatness of our life in the subordination of all personal wishes and ideas under the commission that came to be ours. Our gaze was directed upward, not in slavish fear but in the free trust that beheld a career in the commission and a vocation in the career...where in the world was freedom spoken of more passionately than in Germany, from Luther to the philosophy of idealism? – by seeking to free himself from self-will in order to serve the whole: career and freedom were to him two sides of the same thing. However, in doing so he misjudged the world; he did not reckon with the fact that the readiness to subordinate and commit his life to the commission could be misused in the service of evil...It became apparent that Germans still lacked one decisive and fundamental idea: that of the need for the free, responsible act, even against career and commission. In its place came the irresponsible lack of scruples, on the one hand, and self-tormenting scruples that never led to action, on the other. But civil courage can grow only from the free

responsibility of the free man. Only today are Germans beginning to discover what free responsibility means. It is founded in a God who calls for the free venture of faith to responsible action and who promises forgiveness and consolation to the one who on account of such action becomes a sinner (Bonhoeffer, 1942-1943).

Bonhoeffer's statement is a reminder of the responsibility that comes with freedom and a promising society that offers civility and stability for the future. He assures us that responsible action is the only way to preserve that freedom. Bonhoeffer was most assuredly a Christian man of action. The idea of Public theology is not a new idea, it's only new terminology. Future generations will benefit from the study of Public theology and consider whether there are nuggets of truth that may be beneficial in the future.

7.9 Drawing conclusions

Drawing conclusions about the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust begins with understanding the measure of what is right and wrong. That standard for the Confessing Church was the Bible. Germany during the early twentieth century faced many social, political, and economic challenges that affected how they viewed Nazi ideology. The church was immune to the same influences. Going back to the Reformation and Martin Luther moving forward to Adolf Hitler, Germany faced tumultuous times. How the people responded, more specifically, how the Confessing Church responded is worth considering for the benefit of future generations that will experience similar circumstances.

The Confessing Church stated its beliefs in the Barmen Declaration. It was apparent with the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt that they were not satisfied with their obedience to the Barmen Declaration and other theological and ethical beliefs were shaped. What went wrong with the Confessing Church? Why did they not respond with consistency to what was stated in the Barmen Declaration? Chapter 8 will consider the responses and what could have been differently. Also, it is important to consider what ecclesiastical lessons can be learned from the Confessing Church. Theology and ethics are such vast topics it seems impossible to consider all that warrants examination. Here the highlights have been considered, but they have not been exhausted. There were many factors that resulted in the response of the Confessing Church. The fact is that theology did play a significant role in determining how the Confessing Church responded.

CHAPTER 8 IMPLICATIONS FROM THE CONFESSING CHURCH

8.1 Implications from the Confessing Church response

Compelling evidence has been observed that reveals that the Confessing Church did not respond satisfactorily to the Holocaust. By Confessing Church's own confession, they did not respond adequately. One can argue that any response by the Confessing Church to the Holocaust would have fallen short of adequate, given the totalitarian control of the Nazis. Intimidation and the treatment of those who did speak out certainly was a grave reminder for those who may have been considering a more aggressive response. It must be considered that with the number of Christians in Germany at the time, if they had unified, they could have made a difference. Adolf Hitler was an evil dictator, but he was also cognizant of how and when he could implement his ideology; if he was not cautious at the end, he certainly was at the beginning.

The implications recommended here are for the twenty-first century Protestant church. The church should never underestimate the importance of one voice. Second, the church should focus on its mission (Matt. 12:30; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Third, the church needs to integrate belief and action (theology and ethics) into its response against wrongdoing. Fourth, the church needs to respect the place of the Jews in salvation history. Fifth, the church must place a high value on human life (*Imago Dei*). Lastly, the church needs to allow Christian values and morals to influence government and be proactive against racial intolerance. These implications are drawn from those who lived the nightmare of the Holocaust. Some sacrificed all while others hardly sacrificed anything.

8.2 Never underestimate the importance of one voice

The importance of one voice may be seen in two scenarios. The first was an attempt to prepare for war or a strong anthropologic society by eliminating those who were considered dispensable. Hitler authorized the intentional euthanizing of what he referred to as "useless eaters" (Strom, 1994:279). These were people who were considered as weak Germans who offered no value to the Nazis. The following is a description of those Hitler placed in this category:

They included epileptics, alcoholics, people with birth defects, hearing losses, mental illnesses, and personality disorders as well as those who were visually impaired, had developmental lags, or even suffered from certain orthopaedic problems. In his view, these people were marginal human beings who had to make a case for their own survival at a time when the nation was preparing for war (279).

This may seem unthinkable for some who are removed from the context of the Holocaust, but T-4 programme (euthanasia) is not inconsistent with the other atrocities that were committed. Ultimately this programme included all ages. This was not a brutal shooting or just a gas chamber killing; it was a medically induced murder, a gas chamber killing, and abortion comparable procedure that appeared as if one was simply being put to sleep. This was a programme that was masked under the guise of science. This process involved a team of medical experts called the “Reich Committee for the Scientific Treatment of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Diseases” (280-281).

Two Confessing Church members requested answers as rumours of the programme began to spread: Friedrich von Bodelschwingh and Paul-Gerhard Braune. The two were ministers in the Confessing Church and served as heads of institutions that worked with disabled adults. The T-4 programme as has been mentioned previously was unthinkable to these two ministers who served as administrators of mental institutions. Part of the “process” was that the Reich Committee requested that doctors fill out questionnaires that would help them determine which patients had no value for society. Bodelschwingh and Braune refused to submit the questionnaires, which was the first of two resistance responses by the Confessing Church ministers. The second act of resistance was that they began to ask questions and make public their concern over what was taking place. Once the idea of the T-4 programme became public after public pressure and resistance from the Confessing Church ministers, the programme was temporarily halted, at least publicly. Later it would be revealed that the programme continued until the end of the war (Bergen, 2009:128-132).

The pausing of the programme was believed to have been from the pressure Hitler received from the public, the Catholic Church, and the Confessing Church ministers, Bodelschwingh and Braune (132-133). One can only imagine what would have happened if the outcry over this and the other injustices had been uniform and consistent throughout the Confessing Church. It is for this reason that future implications are indispensable before future acts of oppression and genocide become a reality. If these examples are given the proper attention, the church can help avoid these situations. If the church does not heed the examples from the past, similar events become more likely.

The second scenario was the church struggle between the German Christians and the Pastors' Emergency League in 1933. The elections to unify the Protestant church under a Reich Bishop resulted in policy changes. As has been mentioned in previous chapters, the Civil Service Laws were being instituted in the church by the Reich Bishop, and this led to a removal of all baptized

non-Aryans from positions within the church. Martin Niemöller and the Pastors' Emergency League, initially 12 other pastors, protested the move on behalf of the German Christians.

This resistance caught the attention of Adolf Hitler. Hitler called a meeting between the two factions, supposedly an attempt to reconcile the situation. The reality was that this ended up being deception when Herman Goring, one of Hitler's top officials, revealed a phone recording of Martin Niemöller. This recording appeared to portray Niemöller not as just a resistor, but possibly a threat to the Nazi party (Ericksen, 2012: 251-252). The fact that the P.E.L attracted Hitler's attention and he responded with a meeting, although a probable trap, reminds one that even dictators in the beginning are aware of their support. Yes, there is always a real threat of repercussions, but the alternative is sure: no response will guarantee the use of dictatorship and oppression.

The response of the Confessing Church to the Holocaust demonstrates a collapse in a theological Christian-ethical system of their beliefs defined in the Barmen Declaration. The evidence of this is the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt, a post-war recognition of the failure of the Confessing Church to honour their core values. The Holocaust offers a valuable opportunity for those in a post-Holocaust world to learn significant implications. History offers future generations the ability to correct wrong responses, avoid disastrous circumstances, and/or evade missed opportunities. If current generations do not study history and learn its lessons, they are doomed to repeated injustices or "crimes against humanity" like those of the Holocaust.

What implications can be drawn from the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust? First it must be realized that there is not an exhaustive list of lessons from the Holocaust in general. This is one of the most complex events in history. The topic is broad and never-ending in information. Generations have passed since the Holocaust first began. It has been over eighty years since the beginning in 1933. It has been over seventy years since the Allied Forces liberated Auschwitz and the other concentration camps, or what has been called "the killing factories." Like a detective, if the information is not acquired while there are survivors, it may be lost. The survivors are now well into their seventies and details could be lost due to health problems. It would be difficult to say that details would be lost to memory, because it is hard to imagine anyone that is mentally healthy forgetting the atrocities. Fortunately, there has been a wealth of information gathered from primary sources.

The Confessing Church specifically has not been as highly publicized as other entities, but the writings of men like Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller and Eberhard Bethge have

offered much information regarding the events that have been discussed here in this research. The ecclesiastical implications are certainly narrower than the Holocaust in general, but much more research still needs to occur to exhaust the subject.

8.3 The Church needs to focus on its mission

It is essential that the church directs its attention to *loving God and loving their neighbours*. That is the mission of the Protestant Church as defined in Matthew 12:30, Mark 12:30, and Luke 10:27. The church needs to continually be reminded of its mission, so that when its worldview is threatened by society, culture, politics, and/or government, they will stay focused on their mission. The second part of the mission is developing a *Theologia Crucis* (A Theology of the Cross). This Latin phrase captures the essence of what the Confessing Church missed as an opportunity. The political concerns became the focus of the Confessing Church and the result was that the mission of the church floundered. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was less than satisfied with the Confessing Church's response to the attacks of the Nazis on the Jews. Bonhoeffer's good friend Eberhard Bethge comments on Bonhoeffer's mood:

Bonhoeffer felt shame for the Confessing Church, just as one feels shame for a scandal in one's own family. For that Confessing Synod decided in favour of the oath to the Fuhrer when it already knew that a regulation was coming by which non-Aryans were compelled to have a large "J" stamped on their identity cards - an omen of worse things to come, and the occasion of the flight of his twin sister (1970:491).

Bonhoeffer saw the mission of the cross or the theology of the cross as having implications for the Jews. He was looking for the Confessing Church to make a strong statement against the Nazi measures against the Jews, like the Aryan Paragraph, clarifying their disdain with the oppression. Bonhoeffer saw the Jew as a neighbour as the parable of the Good Samaritan espouses (Luke 10:30-37). He saw the church bearing responsibility because of the words of Christ in this parable. Bonhoeffer submitted that what Jesus did on the cross was "costly" and so should the believer's life be in the community of Christ. To Bonhoeffer, the Confessing Church should follow the example of the cross and sacrifice for their neighbours, the Jews.

8.3.1 A gospel-centred mission

One challenge for churches in a socio-politico culture in the twenty-first century is *focusing on a gospel-centred mission*. This was also the challenge for the church in the twentieth century during the Holocaust. There was a temptation to elevate nationalism over biblical belief, especially in light of World War I and the Weimar Republic's collapse. National pride was

severely damaged after the Treaty of Versailles and the loss of the Great War. Some Confessing Church members like Martin Niemöller fought in World War I. The appearance of a failed republic was being replaced by a hope in the National Socialist Party and potentially for a brighter future for Germany, must have been tempting. At what cost does one seek a brighter future for their country and their family?

For the Confessing Church, there should have been a focus on their biblical mission. There are several passages that describe the mission of the believer. First, there is the command to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. This is often treated as a choice when Christ made it a command. It was an imperative, meaning this was not an option; Jesus expected a genuine disciple to make other disciples. Second, there is the command to love God above all, love your neighbour, and to put oneself last in all other matters (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). Clearly in the Old and New Testaments, there are an abundance of commands to love God and love others.

Can one genuinely love someone and hear of or watch the grotesque atrocities being done to them and not respond? Paul speaks of God demonstrating His love for people by Jesus dying on the cross (Rom. 5:8). Love should be demonstrated in tangible ways. Can one be a bystander and truly love another person who is being beaten or murdered? Third, is the command or the directive to be a witness of Christ wherever one is? (Acts 1:8.) When these three commands are combined, there is a formula for success biblically speaking. If the Confessing Church had followed these three directives from Christ, no matter the outcome, they would have been obedient to God's Word. Therefore, the Divine Command Theory of Ethics should be natural for the Christian: to be obedient to the sovereign Lord who gave scripture to prepare man for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

8.4 Integrate belief and action

Another area of concern for the church is *creating a balance of theology and ethics*. This is balancing orthodoxy (belief) and orthopraxy (practice). Orthodoxy may be summarized as the right thinking about God and Christ. The exercise of that knowledge results in orthopraxy or the right actions based on what one knows of God (Enns, 2014). Some post-modern thinkers add the idea of orthopathy or the right feelings about self or others (Frost & Hirsch, 2008). One must be careful about using feelings and emotions, however, due to their subjective nature. They can be deceptive if not measured constantly against right thinking, but right action should always be a product of right thinking. The Confessing Church had the right knowledge of God, but they

were lacking in their action. There were isolated cases like that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer where resistance was based on his understanding of several passages, not the least of which was the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

The Cost of Discipleship was based on the idea that grace was not cheap and should not be treated that way but was costly and required sacrifice. The majority of the Confessing Church revealed in the Stuttgart Confession that they had failed in the practice of their orthodoxy: “We accuse ourselves for not standing to our beliefs more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently” (1945). The lesson for future generations is to stand firm on biblical beliefs, pray faithfully, believe with the right attitude, and demonstrate genuine love. The virtues of faith, hope, and love are repeated throughout the Bible and particularly in 1 Corinthians 13. The church should look to the foundation of its existence after Pentecost where believers live in community with one another. They loved and cared for one another as they met each other’s needs. The balance of this knowledge and practice resulted in many coming to faith. The demonstration of love is a powerful tool in the hands of the church. The Confessing Church had the knowledge of love but was lacking in its demonstration.

8.5 Respect the Jews’ position in salvation history

Karl Barth knew much about *understanding the unique character of Judaism*. Barth understood the unique desire of God for Israel’s election. A thorough search of the Bible reveals multiple verses that highlight the unique character of the relationship between God and the Jews. Beginning in Genesis 12:1-3, God makes a covenant with Abram to bless his family. This pattern continues throughout the Old Testament where God renews His covenantal relationship with the nation of Israel, the Jews. Although Barth never mentions this special relationship in the Barmen Declaration, he later acknowledged in a letter addressed to Pastor Hermann Albert Hesse, “She (the Confessing Church) still has not responded to the millions that suffer unjustly. To the simplest questions concerning public integrity she has found not a word” (Barth, 1935).

When Barth, who was the primary draftsman of the Barmen Declaration, wrote the Confession of Faith, most of the emphasis had shifted from the Aryan Paragraph being a law that was about injustice for the Jews to a threat to the autonomy of the Confessing Church. Later, through a slow progression of events, Barth as well as many other realized the Final Solution (the extermination of the European Jews), was more serious than realized in the beginning of 1933. The end of the war in 1945 revealed the mass murder of the Jews, estimated to be six million or

more. One would have to eliminate all the Old Testament and the entirety of the New Testament, to justify such a heinous act. That is exactly what the Reich Bishop Mueller and the German Christians attempted to do. In the Old Testament we see God redeeming Israel after every act of disobedience. The repetitive cycle of God's covenant blessing on Israel, the disobedience of Israel, consecration of God's people through a prophet, and God's restoration. This cycle continued until the crucifixion of Jesus, which was the ultimate and permanent act of redemption. Why would God repeatedly give Israel opportunities to repent and be restored? Paul gives the answer to this question in Romans 5:8, it was God's demonstration of love for the Jews and Gentiles that was revealed in the passion of Christ.

Yes, as one reads Romans 9-11 there is a theme of God's displeasure with the people of Israel that resulted in the path of salvation for the Gentiles. However, Paul never states that it was the place of the government to execute eternal judgment on the people of Israel in Romans 13. Only in the case of civil judgment does the government have the right to bear the sword. Eternal judgment is set aside for God on those, including the Jews, who reject His son Jesus (Grudem, 2108: 508-512). The church of the present and the future will do well to recognize the unique relationship between God and the Jews throughout scripture and salvation history. Along with the millions of others who the Confessing Church should have spoken up for, the Jews as God's special subjects should have been a priority.

Some in the Protestant Church might see Paul as rejecting Judaism in his writings, but it can be suggested that Paul was not rejecting Judaism, only stating that salvation was "by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8-9) for all of God's elect, regardless of Jew or Gentile (Williamson, 1993:77-78). The Lutheran church as has been previously stated followed the thought processes of its founding father, Martin Luther. But even Luther early in his ministry tried to convert the Jews, recognizing the special and unique relationship they have with God. Luther wrote, "I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith of their fathers, the prophets, and patriarchs" (Luther, 1523). It was twenty years hence when Luther wrote *On the Jews and Their Lies* revealing a bitter side of his nature for those who would not convert to Christianity.

8.6 Place a high value on human life (*Imago Dei*)

There needs to be a re-establishing of *the value of Imago Dei* in the church. It was obvious that the Nazis placed little or no value on non-Aryan life. It can also be concluded that they placed

no value on people being created in the image or likeness of God, especially since many of the passages that speak of humankind being created in the image of God are in the Old Testament, which the German Christians and the Reich Bishop removed from the churches because of their Jewish influence. If a Christian were to remove the Jewish influence from their life or Bible, it means to remove a large portion of the Bible, if not all of it. Paul would have been considered what may be referred to in the twenty-first century as “multi-cultural.” Paul required Timothy to be circumcised so that he could relate to the Jews (Acts 16:3).

Not only are there obvious connections with Judaism and the texts that relate humankind as being made in the image of God, the creation event describes something that was important for the author of the Bible to emphasize, which is that humankind was made in the image of his Creator. When a masterpiece of any sort is created, the artists take great pride in their accomplishment. Their masterpiece will go on display to be seen, and the artist generally wants that art to reflect their own thoughts and values. Apparently, God placed such a high value on humankind that He made them in His own likeness and image. Paul even tells the believers in Ephesus that they were God’s masterpiece (Eph. 2:10). Paul also alludes to the incarnation by saying that the believers were created in Christ Jesus in this verse. The Confessing Church would have done well to have understood the value of all life based on these verses. The church of the twenty-first century needs to not only understand the value that God has placed on life by creating mankind in His image, but they should be willing to preserve and protect that life, especially to please God and take care of His creation.

The last consideration for the church is that value for human life needs to be re-established regardless of one’s beliefs. Regardless of religious affiliation, most people would agree that unjustly taking one’s life is not healthy for society. Justice must be defined, and who has the right to define that? Religion is helpful in this because it gives parameters for morals and values. Under totalitarian regimes, a dictator can define what the parameters are for value on human life. Hitler placed no value on a life that was not useful to his ideology. The T-4 Programme is a perfect example. One historian explains the atrocities as follows:

The children who became the first victims of T-4 perished from overdoses of medicines that induced illnesses or physical conditions on which deaths could be blamed. As the program expanded, starvation and direct injection into the heart of poisonous substances, usually, phenol, became supplementary murder methods. Usually doctors did the killing in this initial phase. The general procedure was to move the institutional inhabitants, whom physicians selected for death to one of six designated sanatoria spread around the country - no more than four of which were operational at the same time - and then carry out the

executions there. By January 1940, the MDs in charge of the program had decided that establishing small gas chambers at the institutions would be more efficient - that is, would allow them to kill more people in less time and with fewer personnel than the injection method. They soon rigged up rooms that resembled shower facilities with piping that carried carbon monoxide (CO) instead of water into the chambers (Hayes, 2017: 120-121).

Does this sound like there was a high value placed on human life? These were not just Jews, but also children, adults, men, and women that were physically or mentally challenged and deemed useless for war efforts. The same philosophy was being used for the “Final Solution,” the extermination of European Jews in addition to many other minority groups such as the Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and conscientious objectors who defied Hitler. The death camps or concentration camps used the same philosophies of murder and killing that the T-4 Programme used. There is nothing humane in this. One can argue for “mercy killings,” but these did not fit that category.

For Christians, however, the compelling argument is made for placing value on what matters. The Confessing Church made an admirable attempt at organizing some theological and ethical resistance, but one can question whether they went far enough. The overwhelming truth is that they did not. The future of humankind, God’s creation, deserves the value that its Creator placed on it. The twenty-first century church will do well to honour this value on human life for future generations.

8.6.1 Resist any form of racial prejudice

It was not simply racial prejudice that the Nazis practised, because Judaism is a religion with a distinct culture. The Nazis viewed the Jews in racial terms, but it has been debated whether they can even truly be considered a race. One author describes Hitler’s agenda of one as “race and space” (Bergen, 2009). Hitler sought to expand his power through occupying territory and controlling the German people genetically and/or racially. Maybe a better way of looking at the unique characteristics of people is culture, not race. Traditional thought processes refer to the different adaptations of one’s physical characteristics to the environment they live in - a racial distinction. The church should look to the Bible for how people are viewed. The Confessing Church, along with many Germans, taught that the Jews were an inferior race.

There is no evidence in scripture that any form of racism is warranted. The Bible teaches in the idea of *Imago Dei*, that there is only one race. If one defines race by skin colour, cultural background, or religion, then it may be supposed that race is more like what Nazi ideology supported. This understanding of race leads to more opportunities for racism than that of the

biblical view of Imago Dei. This ideology likely influenced the national side of the Confessing Church. The Nazis viewed the Jews as a race of people that were inferior to the Nazi version of the Aryan race (Bergen, 2009). One ethical definition of racism is: “Racial prejudice that is overtly or covertly supported by institutional power structures” (Walker, 2005:1232). This form of injustice is revealed in slavery, anti-Semitism, genocide and is relevant to this paper.

The Confessing Church along with the post-modern Protestant or Evangelical church is accountable to a Divine Command Theory’s definition of race and racism. Paul makes this statement in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (ESVUK). The church will profit much from Paul’s understanding of the relationship between all people in Jesus Christ. If the Confessing Church had viewed the Jews in this way, then the Holocaust may not have happened. Institutions do not define race for Christians, the Bible does. In the Bible the concept of loving one’s neighbour is a repetitive theme (Lev. 19:18; Mat. 19:19; Mat. 22:39; Mar. 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9). Who is considered a neighbour? Luke chapter 10 suggests that anyone in need is a neighbour. In this passage it was a Samaritan, who culturally was looked down upon by other socio-political classes. This concept of love and compassion should permeate the church. The church must learn to look at people the way God does, not by skin colour, social distinction, cultural divide, but by their need and heart.

8.6.2 The Church is to be proactive against state-sponsored racism

Every government and culture throughout history has presented its own unique challenges and circumstances. *Forecasting ecclesiastical challenges in culture* can be a valuable tool in the hands of the church. The Confessing Church surely had an inkling of an idea that things were at the very least unpredictable with the Nazis. That alone should have been reason for them to consider opposing the National Socialist Party. There are a variety of research tools available for the church today such as Pew Research that offers statistical data on cultural, social, political, and ecclesiastical trends. The twenty-first century church leader needs to be a “modern day prophet” in order to forecast how the church should prepare to respond to changes. The Confessing Church appeared to be more reactive than proactive. Being proactive and preparing for the worst-case scenario when it comes to socio-political challenges is a wise approach.

There have been many oppressive regimes in the twentieth and twenty-first century. The list is numerous: Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Fidel Castro, Mohamar Khadafy, Ayatollah Khomeini and Kim Jong-un, to name a few. These men, unfortunately, will not be the

last as history continues to record the rise of unpredictable leaders that have power and control around the world. The church will need to prepare for the next threat of genocide and oppression. As was mentioned at the first part of this chapter there is much to learn from these past leaders and events and one of the most important lessons that one can learn is to anticipate who the next dictator or tyrannical ruler will be and put a plan in place for the church to take a strong stance against them.

The Confessing Church probably never anticipated the murdering of an estimated 11 million people. Nearly six million or more were Jewish (Bergen, 2009). The prophets of the Old Testament had the advantage of God's guidance to foretell the events that in some cases were 800 years prior to the actual events. The church should seek guidance from God and as Paul said to "test the spirits" to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1). Much of the apocalyptic literature studied in its proper literary context such as the book of Revelation uses imagery to describe the events of the end times. The warnings of Revelation, describe a future time that will be some of the most turbulent that the world has ever seen. To know something is going to happen and not prepare for it is irresponsible. What can the church do to forecast these movements? One, they must pay attention to what is happening in the world with reliable resources. Many of the social media outlets have been questioned for the accuracy of their reports. The church must find reliable sources that report world events accurately. Second, the church must look and learn from history. As was mentioned in the first chapter, if one does not learn from the mistakes of others in history, they cannot vent over the consequences if they are not willing to act. The T-4 programme was intermittently stopped due to the actions of a few people; it is hard to imagine what thousands or even millions of resistors could have accomplished. Third, the church should consider that the Holocaust was not immediately realized. The events slowly progressed toward the "final solution," they did not happen overnight. It was a methodical step-by-step process, where one piece of legislation built on another. Patience will be required to monitor the progression of these movements. Strategic anticipation and commitment to take active resistance will be required.

8.7 Reassert Christian values and morals in politics and government

How does one begin allowing Christian values and morals to influence politics and government, and be proactive against racial attacks in society? This question is at the root of much debate that traces back to the Reformation and beyond. Even the Roman Emperors struggled with the relationship between church and state. Constantine has often been regarded as having made Christianity the state religion of Rome. Constantine made Christianity legal and stopped the

persecution of Christians. It was Theodosius I who made it the state religion. Where should one draw the line between state and religion?

The Two Kingdoms theory became influential among the Lutheran church in Germany. Romans 13 says much about one's obedience to the government but leaves unanswered questions concerning a state that abuses its God-ordained responsibility. The Holocaust demonstrates that when there is no religious influence in government, it can be as wicked and evil as society and with more resources. The opposite can also be a danger, when a state adopts a religion and forces it on their subjects.

The Protestant Church needs to evaluate its position on this matter. One of the challenges that the Protestants in Germany faced was that they could not unify around a concerted effort in this area. The German Christians supported the National Socialists while the Confessing Church opposed them. As has been stated previously, the division that existed in Germans prevented a major response, even if the German Christians had desired to resist or respond. Future efforts to refute a totalitarian government where a wicked dictator rules will not be accomplished without a united effort that crosses ecclesiastical divides.

The matter of the relationship between government and religion has been examined in Western society due to the events of the Holocaust. Irving Greenberg has been one of those asking for a re-examination of the relationship between the two. Greenberg states: "Secular authority unchecked becomes absolute. Relative values thus become the seedbed of absolute claims, and this is idolatry. This vacuum was a major factor in the Nazi ability to concentrate power and carry out the destruction without protest or resistance" (1977:29). Pastor Richard J. Neuhaus holds the same sentiment regarding the context of the Holocaust and the twenty-first century Protestant church:

Realizing that the vision and values of a religious people cannot be excluded from the public realm, requires major readjustments in the way we conduct our public business. Realizing that faith can no longer be isolated from public reason requires major readjustments in the ways Jews and Christians understand their religion (1976:30).

Whether one agrees completely with Greenberg or Neuhaus is not the primary thought, but it is worth considering if the church needs to re-evaluate the unique nature of the relationship between religion and government. As has been well documented throughout Holocaust studies, a government that goes unchecked can do much harm to humanity. Professor Franklin Littell who has researched the Holocaust and the church's relationship to it warns: "The disestablishment of historic religion(s) may, unless accompanied by an affirmation of the

temporal values of pluralism and open interreligious dialogue, create a vacuum which will be filled sooner or later by a new coercive orthodoxy” (1977:10). The Nazification of the churches is an example of Littell’s warning. A new and possibly devastating orthodoxy may be created in the name of religion which has no evidence or residue of mainstream religion. Another scholar has commented with a warning as well:

State sovereignty cannot be allowed to be idolatrous. Therein is the church-state tension as I see it for the future. Ancient Rome was tolerant of many religions; however, demanded worship of the Emperor as divine, Emperor worship being symbolic of imperial unity. The early Christians could not do that. Hitler led Germany into a similar situation. A few resisted; millions of Jews died (Manschreck, 1976:121).

There were certainly enough warning signs from the Holocaust for future generations to consider the consequences of unchecked government and power. The example that was used in the previous chapter on theology referred to in Acts 5:29, when the apostles stated, “We must obey God rather than man.” As a Christian, it is hard to discard totally this example of honouring God over the emperor when the emperor demands a Christian disobey a clear command of God. If one follows the thought of Bonhoeffer in his *Ethics* compilation, there is no area of the Christian life that should be separated from Christ.

One thing is for certain, the Confessing Church demonstrated what a lack of morality and ethics will result in. The Confessing Church confessed a biblical stance with the Barmen Declaration, but did they go far enough? The result is they probably should have not only made a confession of faith, but some standard of accountability to act in a biblical and ethical resistance. If the German Christians had united with the Confessing Church, the probability of influencing the outcome is would have been much more likely. The question remains, did they want a different outcome? The Christian must ask today, is a government without any influence of religion or morals best for society? Karl Barth made the following statement, “No neutrality with God is possible. We must choose between the true God and idolatry” (III/4:307). This part of Barth’s theology is hard to argue with from a Christian perspective. Nationalism provided its own form of idolatry, and the church must be willing to act.

Confessing Churchman Alfred Leikam gives one a view of the struggle with balancing state and church loyalties. In 1933 Leikam was involved with the Hitler Youth to show his patriotism. As a Christian, he realized that he was caught between two worlds, the world of submitting to the Nazi ideology or submitting himself to Christ. The two were at odds with each other and total submission was required from both as it seemed to Leikam. Eventually the young Confessing

Church member chose his Christian values over Nazi ideology. He was ultimately punished for taking a stance against the Hitler Youth and spent five years and nine months in concentration camps after being arrested in 1938 (Leikam, 1988:395). In the concentration camps, Leikam's experience led him to realize, "Be reconciled. All the people must learn to live in peace. The concentration camp convinced me of that" (396). His resolve was that faith and politics cannot be totally separated as many believe.

Leikam's experiences as a Christian and with the Holocaust shaped the future of his life. He became an advocate for peace and maintained that faith and politics are not to be "segregated" (396). Leikam contends that:

The church must ensure that justice and civil rights are respected by the State. The church must be the spiritual guardian of the State. When the state fails to respect justice and civil rights, the church must become its chief critic. To those who would argue that religion and civic power must keep segregated to avoid a sectarian government, it was just such a posture on the part of the German Church which rendered her ineffectual against Nazi tyranny. This does not call for a State religion, but for a moral and civic responsibility on the part of the Christian population, strong enough to negate tyrannical political power (Leikam, 1988:396).

Leikam attributes his spiritual growth to Karl Barth. As one of the younger members in the Confessing Church, he was challenged to grow through experience and faith. He also was heavily influenced by Martin Niemöller and his preaching since he was a Lutheran. Leikam saw disconnect between Nazi ideology and the Christian faith the more he learned. He comments:

If one really believed the teaching of the Catechism and the Ten Commandments, one was obligated to translate that into deeds. When I proceeded to follow the dictates of my newly gained religious convictions, I became aware that the Nazi regime was based on injustice and that it claimed for itself a position which exempted it from the authority of the Ten Commandments. I drew the logical conclusion and joined the Confessing Church which was the being called into existence by Pastor Martin Niemöller (Leikam, 1988:399).

Leikam's response was consistent with that of Bonhoeffer. This is not a comparison or contrast of their theology, but their orthopraxy was the same. They were consistent with one another in that they both saw a need for some type of resistance. Leikam make the statement that at the time he joined the Confessing Church, "At that time, there was no political resistance, not even on the part of the Confessing Church" (399). One can be a Christian and argue that there should not be a state church, but it would be difficult to argue that the moral and ethical influence of the church is not needed in the state, based on the Ten Commandments and statements of faith like The Barmen Declaration (Keith, 2000).

8.8 Open discussions in the public square (Public Theology)

In chapter 7, Public theology was defined and offered for examination. The Confessing Church did not have the opportunity for open discussions with the State or society. Hitler was in total control and the control he exerted over the State did not allow for meetings in the public square without the oversight of the S.S. or one of his lead officials. It is offered here as an opportunity in the twenty-first century to avert crimes against humanity or injustices against social, cultural, ethnic, and political classifications. It is offered here for consideration for two primary reasons from a Christian perspective. One, it allows the unity of the church and society to strengthen resistance against tyranny. The Holocaust not only had a negative effect on religious groups, the evil demonstrated affected all of society. It was an issue with humanity. Therefore, it only makes sense that both can stop and prevent the heinous crimes against humanity. Consider the example of Valkyrie. Valkyrie was the code name of the operation that conspired to assassinate Adolf Hitler. The story of one survivor who was directly involved in the attempt is revealing. In his memoirs, Hans Bernd Gisevius describes the emotion associated with what happened in Germany during those years and the impact it had on everyone. Gisevius recollects:

Unfortunately, the phrase 'collective guilt' has been abused with evil intent and ill results in recent years. Generalizations are never salutary. Often their effect is the opposite of the intended one, for after a time the pendulum swings in the other direction-and again swings too far. Then it is said that everything is relative, everything is destined; what could we 'little people' do to stop the daemonic forces? And in fact, the killing, the pillaging, the cynicism was so monstrous that we often ask whether real men were capable of these things or whether altogether inhuman forces were not behind them. Not the individual criminals but the extent of their crimes assume, to our horrified eyes, superhuman proportions, dangerous than to blur over the personal responsibility-and therefore guilt-of every individual (Gisevius, 1946: 243).

If one reads the thoughts of Gisevius closely, one will notice he made the statement, "what could we little people do?" (Gisevius, 1946: 243.) The little people are those people in society who may have seemed insignificant alone, but together with others would have become a formidable foe and many wanted to do something about the injustices on humanity. Would the unified attempt between church and society have made a difference? That question is impossible to answer now, but in the future, it would not hurt. At a minimum, it would make no difference at all. If one considers the magnitude of the outcome, is anything out of the question?

The second reason why Public theology should be considered is that a Public theology offers an opportunity to make disciples. If Jesus had not had a drink of water with the woman at the well in Samaria, would she have ever known who He was? (John 4:7-38.) Often, Christians avoid

being in environments where people of differing faiths, religions, or values are present. If that is what Christ had intended, then avoiding non-Christians seemingly contradicts what He said to His disciples in Acts 1:8, where He commanded them to be witnesses to what they had experienced with Him. In Romans 10 Paul discusses the importance of those who are committed to the proclamation of the gospel about Christ. Public theology provides the opportunity for the church to do what Christ commanded it to do, be a witness. Many people may criticize Martin Luther for his view of the Jews in the final years of his life, but if one were to evaluate Martin Luther fairly, they need to know that he was concerned about the conversion of the Jews early in his life. Luther's view of the Jews changed when he was older and had experienced many challenges in life that could have altered his view, such as sickness and public ridicule (Metaxas, 2017). It would be unjust to evaluate Luther's view of the Jews from one period of his life, and not his life, which has often been the situation. Bonhoeffer was firm in his belief in the command for one to love one's neighbour (Zech. 8:17; Matt. 5:43; Matt. 19:19). Bonhoeffer saw the civil mandate as a Christian ethical responsibility.

Public theology should be viewed through the perspective of a Christian's responsibility in society. That is what Max Stackhouse concluded in his essays on Public theology that the church from a Reformed theological tradition has a responsibility to society (Hainsworth & Paeth, 2010: 248-250). Society is constantly changing and the church will have to be intentional to relate with the diverse cultures. Public theology can be an avenue to communicate with society about social, economic, and political concerns. Public theology can also provide the opportunity for Christians to communicate ethical responsibility for society, not just the church. If there is a caution associated with Public theology, it is to consider its implications for a social gospel (Grudem, 2010:53).

8.9 A synopsis of the Confessing Church's response

Based on the material examined in this paper, the Confessing Church's theological Christian-ethical response to the Holocaust was inadequate. Various members of the Confessing Church admitted this. There is an abundance of research material on the Holocaust, but more work needs to be done specifically on the Confessing Church's response. The German Protestants had the best opportunity in the opinion of this author to have made the greatest resistance effort. The resistance was divided because the German Protestants were divided. A united church could have made a difference by either thwarting the Nazis in their attempt at the Final Solution or delaying the movement until the Allied Forces could gain control of the region.

The terms used in the title, "Theological Christian-Ethical" suggests that the beliefs and actions of the Confessing Church were biblical. One might argue that the Barmen had biblical statements in it but did not go far enough. Without the proper belief, there cannot be proper action. One key component missing from the Barmen Declaration and was therefore missing from the Confessing Church's response was the Jewish question. Another key component appears to have been the struggle within the Protestants and the Confessing Church with nationalism. In the material covered, there are brief mentions of these key components after the war. It is difficult to assess the real motivation behind the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt. A genuine theological Christian-ethical response would have had all the right orthodoxy and would have resulted in all the right orthopraxy. The right belief and the right action are at the core of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Those who wish to do as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, and do everything for the glory of God, will know what to do and when to do it. It is a simple, yet profound question to ask; "How can God be glorified in my actions?" One can resolve that the implications for the church from the Confessing Church's response to the Holocaust are many. The questions of Alfred Leikam and the prophet Elijah from 1 Kings 18:21 seem appropriate to challenge the church with, "Loyalty to Christ or obedience to Caesar? How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: if Baal, then follow him" (395).

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Pastor's Emergency League Pledge 1933 October

1. I engage to execute my office as minister of the Word, holding myself bound solely to Holy Scripture and to the Confessions of the Reformation as the true exposition of Holy Scripture.
2. I engage to protest, regardless of the cost, against every violation of this confessional stand.
3. I hold myself responsible to the utmost of my ability for those who are persecuted on account of this confessional stand.
4. In making this pledge, I testify that the application of the Aryan Paragraph within the Church of Christ has violated the confessional stand (Cochrane, 1972: 109).

Appendix 2

The Theological Declaration of Barmen 1934

Written by Karl Barth and the confessing church in Nazi Germany in response to Hitler's national church. Its central doctrines concern the sin of idolatry and the lordship of Christ

I. An Appeal to the Evangelical Congregations and Christians in Germany

- 8.01 The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church met in Barmen, May 29-31, 1934. Here representatives from all the German Confessional Churches met with one accord in a confession of the one Lord of the one, holy, apostolic Church. In fidelity to their Confession of Faith, members of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches sought a common message for the need and temptation of the Church in our day. With gratitude to God they are convinced that they have been given a common word to utter. It was not their intention to found a new Church or to form a union. For nothing was farther from their minds than the abolition of the confessional status of our Churches. Their intention was, rather, to withstand in faith and unanimity the destruction of the Confession of Faith, and thus of the Evangelical Church in Germany. In opposition to attempts to establish the unity of the German Evangelical Church by means of false doctrine, by the use of force and insincere practices, the Confessional Synod insists that the unity of the Evangelical Churches in Germany can come only from the Word of God in faith through the Holy Spirit. Thus alone is the Church renewed.
- 8.02 Therefore the Confessional Synod calls upon the congregations to range themselves behind it in prayer and steadfastly to gather around those pastors and teachers who are loyal to the Confessions.
- 8.03 Be not deceived by loose talk, as if we meant to oppose the unity of the German nation! Do not listen to the seducers who pervert our intentions, as if we wanted to break up the unity of the German Evangelical Church or to forsake the Confessions of the Fathers!
- 8.04 Try the spirits whether they are of God! Prove also the words of the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church to see whether they agree with Holy Scripture and with the Confessions of the Fathers. If you find that we are speaking contrary to Scripture, then do not listen to us! But if you find that we are taking our stand upon Scripture, then let no fear or temptation keep you from treading with us the path of faith and obedience to the Word of God, in order that God's people be of one mind upon

earth and that we in faith experience what he himself has said: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Therefore, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

II. Theological Declaration Concerning the Present Situation of the German Evangelical Church

8.05 According to the opening words of its constitution of July 11, 1933, the German Evangelical Church is a federation of Confessional Churches that grew out of the Reformation and that enjoy equal rights. The theological basis for the unification of these Churches is laid down in Article 1 and Article 2(1) of the constitution of the German Evangelical Church that was recognized by the Reich Government on July 14, 1933:

- Article 1. The inviolable foundation of the German Evangelical Church is the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is attested for us in Holy Scripture and brought to light again in the Confessions of the Reformation. The full powers that the Church needs for its mission are hereby determined and limited.
- Article 2 (1). The German Evangelical Church is divided into member Churches (*Landeskirchen*).

8.06 We, the representatives of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches, of free synods, Church assemblies, and parish organizations united in the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church, declare that we stand together on the ground of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of German Confessional Churches. We are bound together by the confession of the one Lord of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

8.07 We publicly declare before all evangelical Churches in Germany that what they hold in common in this Confession is grievously imperilled, and with it the unity of the German Evangelical Church. It is threatened by the teaching methods and actions of the ruling Church party of the "German Christians" and of the Church administration carried on by them. These have become more and more apparent during the first year of the existence of the German Evangelical Church. This threat consists in the fact that the theological basis, in which the German Evangelical Church is united, has been continually and systematically thwarted and rendered ineffective by alien principles, on the part of the leaders and spokesmen of the "German Christians" as well as on the part of the Church

administration. When these principles are held to be valid, then, according to all the Confessions in force among us, the Church ceases to be the Church and the German Evangelical Church, as a federation of Confessional Churches, becomes intrinsically impossible.

- 8.08 As members of Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches we may and must speak with one voice in this matter today. Precisely because we want to be and to remain faithful to our various Confessions, we may not keep silent, since we believe that we have been given a common message to utter in a time of common need and temptation. We commend to God what this may mean for the interrelations of the Confessional Churches.
- 8.09 In view of the errors of the "German Christians" of the present Reich Church government which are devastating the Church and also therefore breaking up the unity of the German Evangelical Church, we confess the following evangelical truths:
- 8.10-1 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14.6). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber... I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved." (John 10:1, 9.)
- 8.11 Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.
- 8.12 We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.
- 8.13 - 2. "Christ Jesus, whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)
- 8.14 As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, in the same way and with the same seriousness he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures.

- 8.15 We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords-areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.
- 8.16 - 3 "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body [is] joined and knit together." (Eph. 4:15, 16.)
- 8.17 The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as the Lord in Word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit. As the Church of pardoned sinners, it has to testify in the midst of a sinful world, with its faith as with its obedience, with its message as with its order, that it is solely his property, and that it lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and from his direction in the expectation of his appearance.
- 8.18 We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.
- 8.19 - 4 "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant." (Matt. 20:25, 26.)
- 8.20 The various offices in the Church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.
- 8.21 We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, apart from this ministry, could and were permitted to give itself, or allow to be given to it, special leaders vested with ruling powers.
- 8.22 - 5. "Fear God. Honour the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17). Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. [It fulfils this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The Church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and

righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things.

- 8.23 We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well.
- 8.24 We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.
- 8.25 - 6 "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Matt. 28:20.) "The word of God is not fettered." (2 Tim. 2:9.)
- 8.26 The Church's commission, upon which its freedom is founded, consists in delivering the message of the free grace of God to all people in Christ's stead, and therefore in the ministry of his own Word and work through sermon and sacrament.
- 8.27 We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church in human arrogance could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen desires, purposes, and plans.
- 8.28 The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church declares that it sees in the acknowledgment of these truths and in the rejection of these errors the indispensable theological basis of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of Confessional Churches. It invites all who are able to accept its declaration to be mindful of these theological principles in their decisions in Church politics. It entreats all whom it concerns to return to the unity of faith, love, and hope.

From: *The Church's Confession under Hitler*. Arthur C. Cochrane. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962, pp. 237-242.

Appendix 3

The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt 1945

The Council of the Protestant Church in Germany welcomes representatives of the World Council of Churches to its meeting on October 18-19, 1945, in Stuttgart.

We are the more thankful for this visit, as we know ourselves to be with our people in a great community of suffering, but also in a great solidarity of guilt. With great anguish we state that through us endless suffering has been brought to many peoples and countries. What we have often borne witness to before our congregations, we now declare in the name of the whole church. We have for many years struggled in the name of Jesus Christ against the spirit which found its terrible expression in the National Socialist regime of tyranny, but we accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently.

Now a new beginning can be made in our churches. Grounded on the Holy Scriptures, directed with all earnestness toward the only Lord of the Church, they now proceed to cleanse themselves from influences alien to the faith and to set themselves in order. Our hope is in the God of grace and mercy that He will use our churches as His instruments and will give them authority to proclaim His Word, and in obedience to His will to work creatively among ourselves and among our people.

That in this new beginning we may become wholeheartedly united with the other churches of the ecumenical fellowship fills us with deep joy.

We hope in God that through the common the service of the churches the spirit of violence and revenge which again today tends to become powerful may be brought under control in the whole world, and that the spirit of peace and love may gain the mastery, wherein alone tortured humanity can find healing.

So in an hour in which the whole world needs a new beginning we pray: "Veni Creator Spiritus."

Bishop Wurm-Bishop Meiser, Superintendent Hahn, Bishop Dibelius, Professor Smend, Pastor Asmussen-Pastor Niemöller, Landesoberkirchenrat Lilje, Superintendent Held, Pastor Niesel, Dr Heinemann (Hockenos, 2004:187) Hockenos, Matthew D. (2004). *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 75–90

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Declaration

This is to declare that I, Annette L Combrink, accredited language editor and translator of the South African Translators' Institute, have language-edited the thesis by

JW Lewis

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Prof Annette L Combrink

Accredited translator and language editor

South African Translators' Institute

Membership No. 1000356

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