Flyer Issued by the Confessing Church against National Socialist Church Policy (c. 1934)

Abstract

In an effort to bring the Protestant Church in line with the Nazi regime, Hitler appointed Ludwig Müller Reich Bishop and head of the German Evangelical Church [*Reichskirche*] in the winter of 1934. Müller, a professed German Christian, moved quickly to bring the regional churches under his control. To do this, he dissolved Protestant youth groups, withheld funds, and sanctioned an SA campaign to harass oppositional pastors. By mid-summer 1934, over 50% of the regional churches, including the largest ones in Prussia, had publicly relinquished their authority to Bishop Müller.

In response, a group of anti-German Christian pastors and laypeople wrote the Barmen Declaration in May 1934. This declaration became the basis for the Confessing Church's opposition to the Nazi regime's attempts to Nazify the Protestant Church. This document, a message from a local Confessing Church group in Dresden, outlines many of the beliefs of the Confessing Church. Here, they plead for Germans not to be fooled by the rhetoric of the German Christian movement and the Nazis. They argue that the Church should be the one true authority to preach God's word. Further, they attack the German Christians' efforts to rewrite the teachings of the Bible by saying that Jesus was not a Jew. The Confessing Church is thus the "true" Church. For those in the Confessing Church, the attacks on the Church's authority, its dogma, and its administration was an existential crisis—one that threatened the Church's duties as laid out in its governing constitutions.

Source

Under this sign the church will prevail

By a decree of February 15, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has ordered the election of a general synod that is to give the Protestant Church a new constitution and organization. It is his clearly expressed will that this election shall take place "in complete freedom and in accordance with what the members of the church themselves shall determine."

Fellow Protestants, you need to know what is at stake.

To whom shall your churches belong?
To the living God, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, or to the changeable images that humans make of God?

What shall be proclaimed in your churches?
The eternal truth of the Word of God, or the equivocal talk of those who distort that Word?

Who shall have the leadership in your churches?
Those who serve you in love and truth, or those who seek to rule the church by force and guile?

What shall your children hear in religious education classes?
God's sacred will and the message of Jesus Christ, or legends and fairy tales?

You need to know this now. Decide! Decide clearly! The hour has arrived:

Now you, too, may confess your faith!

Do not let yourself be led astray!

You will be told that it's about deciding: "Jewish church or the Christ church of the Germans." In reality, it's about something else entirely: whether Jesus Christ alone is lord of the church, teacher of conscience, redeemer of death and sin. Do not listen to those who say that the Old Testament is a Jewish book. They don't know it, and if they do know it, they fear its truth.

[…]

Source: Mitteilungsblatt der Bekennenden Kirche gegen die Kirchenpolitik der Nationalsozialisten. Produced by Landesbruderrat der Bekennenden Kirche Sachsens. Dresden, ca. 1934. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Inv.-Nr.: Do 56/1579.3

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