

## Chapter 1 : Presbyterian Mission Agency Confessions | Presbyterian Mission Agency

*The Barmen Declaration or the Theological Declaration of Barmen (Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung) was a document adopted by Christians in Nazi Germany who opposed the Deutsche Christen (German Christian) movement.*

First let me comment that if Dietrich Bonhoeffer had been Orthodox, he would have probably been Saint Dietrich. There is no doubt that this was a man fully committed to serving the Lord Jesus Christ under terrible circumstances. I know that Karl Barth did much of the writing on the Barmen Declaration, but certainly its heart had to be Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Having said that, after the Barmen Declaration was critiqued, even within Lutheranism. For me there is an important sentence in the Barmen Declaration: 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. The Barmen Declaration was written at a time of special need and special trial. In opposition to what was happening, these leaders make a ringing statement about the place of the Church and the State. Speaking 27 years after the death of Abraham Kuyper, they follow various of his points. Kuyper, as I mentioned earlier, foresaw the rise of statism and thought to neutralize its claims by positing the idea of sphere sovereignty. These leaders were writing after the worst had come true. Fascism was winning throughout Europe. Italy, Spain, and Germany had already fallen under its seductive philosophies. Stalinist Communism, the other face of statism, controlled the Soviet Union. Japan was under its own form of statism, built around ancient traditions of emperor worship and the shogunate. Both fascism and communism were making inroads in the United States. It was a bleak time for people of good will. It was , and within five years World War II would begin. Two of its ringing statements were: When I read the above statements, I find myself in substantial agreement with the first one 8. But, I sigh at the second one, because so much depends on how the phrasing is interpreted. A little more definition is found in the Bethel Confession that I will touch on tomorrow, God willing. But, today I will say that part of the danger of confessions written in extreme times is that they are reacting against a particular set of problems that need to be dealt with. But, the solutions to the problems may actually be only applicable to the emergency. They may not actually be good statements of how things are supposed to function in the long run. To put it in a silly way, one may be able to use duct tape as a temporary fix for a particular problem, but generally only until one can do a permanent fix. A similar situation existed in the Stalinist Soviet Union, where the official Church was under the coercive control of the communist State. In both cases, the only possibility was a strict policy of non-cooperation and outright opposition, and a ringing declaration that the Church could not and would not submit to a statist control that would force the Church to violate its own life-giving principles. There is a set of interrelationships and interpenetration that go against the Barmen Declaration.

### Chapter 2 : A modern confession of the Christian faith - ChristianWeek

*Fearing that Barmen could be imposed as the founding confession of a new church union of Reformed and Lutherans within the Old Prussian Union (later called the EKU) and beyond, confessional Lutheranism for a long time refused to allow the Barmen Declaration to be described as a "confession".*

In the view of the delegates to the Synod that met in the city of Barmen in May, 1934, the German Christians had corrupted church government by making it subservient to the state and had introduced Nazi ideology into the German Protestant churches that contradicted the Christian gospel. The Barmen Declaration includes six theses: The source of revelation is only the Word of God – Jesus Christ. Any other possible sources earthly powers, for example will not be accepted. Jesus Christ is the only Lord of all aspects of personal life. There should be no other authority. The message and order of the church should not be influenced by the current political convictions. There is no hierarchy in the church Mt 20, 25f. The state should not fulfill the task of the church and vice versa. State and church are both limited to their own business. Therefore, the Barmen Declaration rejects the subordination of the Church to the state. "Thus alone is the Church renewed" 8. If you find that we are speaking contrary to Scripture, then do not listen to us! The Declaration was mostly written by the Reformed theologian Karl Barth but underwent modification, especially with the introduction of its fifth article on the two kingdoms, as a result of input from several Lutheran theologians. The document became the chief confessional document of the so-called Confessing Church. The ecumenical nature of the Declaration can be seen by its inclusion in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S. One of the main purposes of the Declaration was to establish a three-church confessional consensus opposing pro-Nazi "German Christianity". These three churches were Lutheran, Reformed, and United. Notes and references "Presbyterian Church U.S. Archived from the original on 8 January New Dictionary of Theology. Further reading Becker, Matthew L. The Theological Declaration of Barmen". External links "The Theological Declaration of Barmen". The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S. The Office of the General Assembly.

**Chapter 3 : Confessing Church - Wikipedia**

*The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church met in Barmen, May , 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.*

Even the majority of German Americans arrived in America before and bear no responsibility one way or the other. The point is irrelevant. Moreover, there are plenty of Christian nationalists in the Anglo tradition, free of Nazi baggage and its sinful totalitarianism, to whom we can look for historical inspiration. That being said, we received a message prompted by my post on Friday asking about the Barmen Declaration, which is worth going on record to answer: I wonder if you have dealt with the Theological Declaration of Barmen. It seems like anti-Nazi and anti-Nationalist also it may be construed as anti-kinist. It seems Kinism and Nazism are treated as the same thing with my Christian friends. I had this thrown in my face the other day and have never seen or heard of the Barmen Declaration. Higher criticism places reason and rationality above the truth of Scripture, makes biblical truth subjective, and seeks to divide the historical Jesus from the divine Jesus. All manner of liberal heresies have their root in this attack on the inerrancy of Scripture. Some of the smaller, more radical elements of Positive Christianity wanted to entirely remove the Old Testament and parts of the New Testament, replacing them with elements from Germanic paganism and Vedic Hinduism, thus creating a new syncretistic and purely Aryan religion. Positive Christianity is rightly considered as apostasy by both Protestants and Catholics. In April , the leadership of the federation agreed to write a new constitution forming a new and more centralized national church. However, the goal of those pushing for such a move was not simply to reorganize into a better or more efficient structure, but to use this as an opportunity to have the Deutsche Christen seize control of the entire Protestant German Church and then to transform it into a subservient arm of the German state. In November , the Deutsche Christen held a rally at which speakers openly advocated removing all noncompliant pastors from their office, expelling all racially Jewish Christian converts from the church, removing the Old Testament from the Bible, eliminating all non-German elements from church services, and adopting the narrative of an Aryan Jesus fighting corrupt Jewish forces. The result of this was the Theological Declaration of Barmen. For the next two years, the national socialists attempted to get the Confessing Church to reconcile with the Deutsche Christen, but in May , when some of the leadership of the Confessing Church sent Hitler a message protesting the continued anti-Christian policies of the government in a number of areas and demanding the government stop interfering in church affairs, Hitler lost patience. Hundreds of Confessing Church pastors were arrested, and the entire Confessing Church was put under repressive measures. The Declaration has two sections. The first section is basically the introduction: Here representatives from all the German Confessional Churches met with one accord. It was not their intention to found a new Church or to form a union. 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. 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! 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. The second section deals with six points where they affirm their belief in a scriptural principle and reject the opposing false teachings. There is no area of life where another authority supersedes His. The Christian Church was instituted by God and receives its form, mission, and message solely from God and Scripture. The Church may not alter any of that to suit the political ideology of the day. The leaders of the church are shepherds meant to minister to the sheep. They are not meant to be political leaders to rule over them. The state has no authority to exceed its jurisdiction and subsume the responsibilities of the church. Likewise, the church has no authority to exceed its jurisdiction and take on the functions of the state as its

religious arm. This mission must not be hijacked in favor of a political program. Never is German ethnonationalism in and of itself attacked, nor is the German nation declared to not exist or to lack the right of self-determination. If the liberals in the Confessing Church had tried to include such anti-ethnonationalist points into the declaration, it is unlikely that the conservatives would have been willing to cosign it. God takes this issue very seriously. While the roles of king and high priest should have a supporting, symbiotic relationship, and while each has the responsibility of correcting the other if they stray, they are never to be united into a single office or one co-opted by the other. In addition to violating the separate nature of their jurisdictions, this is an attack on the person of Christ, as only in Him are the roles of prophet, priest, and king truly united. In 2 Chronicles 26, we see the record of King Uzziah committing this sin. But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the Lord had struck him. And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the Lord. We can see another evil within Positive Christianity besides this totalitarian usurpation: In , Hanns Kerrl gave a speech in his role as Reichsbischof to a group of Deutsche Christen in which he proclaimed: That makes me laugh. True Christianity is represented by the party, and the German people are now called by the party and especially the Fuehrer to a real Christianity. While the Deutsche Christen started with their ideology and hacked up and reinterpreted Scripture to make it fit, we start with the inerrancy of Scripture, building from there to determine the biblical blueprints for the nation, society, and family. Kinism affirms the inerrancy of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments, not that the Old Testament is tainted by Semitic influence. Kinism affirms that Jesus Christ is Lord over all and that all other authorities derive their power from Him and thus have scriptural boundaries set on their jurisdictions, not boundaries determined by themselves or a political program. Anyone saying differently has either never read the declaration and is making assumptions about its contents or is just being disingenuous. He works as a business analyst, holding an MBA and an undergraduate degree in political science. A native southerner, he has ancestors who fought with the patriots in the American Revolution, with the Texans at the Alamo, and with the Confederacy in the War for Southern Independence. You can reach him by email at [faithandheritageeditor \[at\] gmail](mailto:faithandheritageeditor[at]gmail).

Chapter 4 : The Barmen Confession | embracethetree

*The Synod of Barmen is an example of a group of church leaders who tried to stand against what they rightly perceived as a growing evil and who attempted to call believers to do the same. Luther\_Jews On the Jews and Their Lies.*

BonhoefferDietrich BarthKarl Karl Barth Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had led a group of young reformers against the brown shirts at the synod, believed it was time to pull out of the state church altogether, particularly after passage of the Aryan Clause, but the other most prominent church critic of the National Socialists, Karl Barth, believed they should stay and fight from within. Few stopped to ponder how the church had come to find itself in such a nightmarish quandary, and it was not at all apparent how, or if, the church could be pulled back from the precipice. There are times when the current of history is a raging torrent and the strength and violence of that current is fed by headwaters that are distant and sometimes obscure. The history of Protestantism in Germany during the early 20th Century is such a whitewater time. There were many forces, tributaries if you will, that fed this river which found its most dramatic moment with the rise to power of National Socialism. Of course it is well known that the rise of German National Socialism ended with the dramatic waterfall of World War II where the course of the river was decided as National Socialism was dashed against the rocks. What was the church doing, if anything, as Hitler was consolidating power and the true nature of National Socialism became apparent? Was the church complicit with the rise of Hitler, or was there a stand against the growing evil? There is one event that will serve as an indication of what the church was doingâ€”The Synod of Barmen and the resulting Barmen Confession. As noted above, we have to search for the headwaters. Sometimes the headwaters are personalities, sometimes they are questions, and sometimes they are ideas; usually they are all three. There are at least four sources to the troubled waters of the early 20th century: The basic issues of the relationship between the Kingdom of God, the Church, and the World were wrestled with as far back as Augustine, bishop of Hippo in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. But Augustine did not provide the last word, and the Church still wrestled for a millennium until the time of that famous German Augustinian monk, Martin Luther. It is easy to see how this understanding would foster passivity in regards to the growing powerâ€”and abuse of powerâ€”of the State. But this doctrine was also buttressed by the parallel doctrine of the Orders of Creation. God has placed all human beings in particular structures of existenceâ€”such as nationality, race, sexual identity, family, work, governmentâ€”that in some form or other are simply givens of creaturely existence. The law and commandments of God are revealed through these common created morphological structures of human existence and function apart from and in tension with the special revelation of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. These basic theological assumptions were used by theologians such as Paul Althaus to frame an understanding of the relationship between the Church and State. The second source began in earnest in the early 19th Century. This forced unity never had the effect desired by Friedrich Wilhelm. Indeed, what ultimately occurred was that the State began to play an even larger role in the life of the Church and for the next few generations, both the leaders of the Church and the members became more and more comfortable with State authority in the Church and expressions of German nationalism. One hundred years later, this close relationship bore its inevitable fruit during the First World War. Thus, the third source is found. At the outbreak of the War to End All Wars, the German Church leaders and theologians supported the war effort without qualification. Even the weapons and uniforms of the soldiers bore religious slogans. This war from the German Church perspective was a holy war. But as the casualties mounted, two million Germans dead, plus thousands upon thousands wounded and maimed the German populous began to turn away from the Church. When the navy mutinied and the November Revolution commenced, Germany surrendered and virtually all of the royalty and nobility fled the country. Out of these ruins, the Weimar Republic was born. The vast majority of the church leaders and theologians were not supporters of the new democratic Republic and yearned for the return of the monarchy. This reactionary attitude of the Church further alienated the Church members and the populous as a whole, but as the terms and effect of the treaty of Versailles became clear, the smoldering ember of German nationalism was stoked and the historic close relationship between the Church and the State re-emerged during the ascendancy of Adolf Hitler, National

Socialism and the widespread concept of the German Volk. This fourth source, the rise of National Socialism and the concept of the Volk is the direct context of the Synod of Barmen. It should be noted that this concept of Volk goes far beyond the ordinary translation into the English people or community. It had a deeper, almost mystical quality that reflected the idea of purpose and destiny. So, when Hitler referred to the Volk, he was not merely referring to Germans as a nationality or even an ethnic group, but he reached deeper and spoke to the collective aspirations, pride and to some extent the divinely-ordained purpose of the German people. To the National Socialists, the State was the natural expression of the Volk. This concept was also imbibed by many in the German Church. Many influential Church leaders were not only ill-equipped to face the rising danger of what Hitler represented, many even welcomed it! When viewed in the historical and ecclesiastical context, it is easier to see why so many were deceived into inaction and even cooperation. The Synod of Barmen is an example of a group of church leaders who tried to stand against what they rightly perceived as a growing evil and who attempted to call believers to do the same. The anti-Semitic writings of Martin Luther, penned late in his life, were used by the Nazis to foment anti-Jewish sentiment. To give the reader a sense of the state of the church as Hitler came to power, we will look at one representative of those who were antagonistic to the aims of Barmen. The new state is again daring to wield the sword of right. It has repudiated the frightful lack of responsibility of the Parliament and showed us again what responsibility means. It has swept out the smut of corruption. It protects against the powers of destruction in literature and the theater. It calls and educates our Volk to a new community will. With the benefit of hindsight, these words of a notable Christian leader are all the more chilling, especially when we realize that his was one of many voices. The Nazis were quick to consolidate power not only in the State, but also in the Church. Disunity could not be tolerated in either and the Nazis used the willing collaborators in the Church to impose their will. The call went out to those who still held to the authority of the Scriptures. Three hundred and twenty ministers and elders responded and the first of many free synods was held. It was at this synod that Karl Barth introduced the principles of what would become the classical statement of resistance to Nazi rule and policy in the German churchâ€”The Barmen Confession. The nature of the struggle brought together Reformed, Lutheran and Union churches and leaders in the common goal of resisting the growing tyranny in both church and state. AlthausBild Paul Althaus The declaration was the product of much discussion and some disagreement. Some of the Lutheran delegates objected to some of the language as being contrary to their Confession and the seeds of eventual disunion were sown, but the final declaration is a strong statement repudiating the idea of the totalitarian state as an exercise in idolatry, and rejected the subordination of the word and Spirit to the church or the leaders in the church. It was, in a manner of speaking, the Declaration of Independence for the faithful and believing church in Germany. Although the Declaration did not specifically address the persecution of the Jews, or specifically identify the Nazis with the errors cited, the declaration is nevertheless beautiful in its simplicity and also in its recognition of the heart of the issue, that Christ is the Head of the Church. Of course history tells us which view gained the upper hand for a time. Ultimately, the Confessing Church movement in Germany fell apart and the faithful churches in Germany suffered greatly.

## Chapter 5 : Barmen Declaration - United Church of Christ

*Timeline Leading up to the Declaration of Barmen August 11, - After WW1, the new constitution of the German Reich ends the "state church" system, although some denominations are still supported by civil taxes.*

Barmen Declaration Barmen Declaration In view of the errors of the "German Christians" and of the present Reich Church Administration, which are ravaging the Church and at the same time also shattering the unity of the German Evangelical Church, we confess the following evangelical truths: I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved. Through him there comes to us joyful liberation from the godless ties of this world for free, grateful service to his creatures. We reject the false doctrine that there could be 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. With both its faith and its obedience, with both its message and its order, it has to testify in the midst of the sinful world, as the Church of pardoned sinners, that it belongs to him alone and lives and may live by his comfort and under his direction alone, in expectation of his appearing. 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. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to have authority over you must be your servant. The Church acknowledges with gratitude and reverence toward God the benefit of this, his appointment. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word, by which God upholds all things. We reject the false doctrine that beyond its special commission the State should and could become the sole and total order of human life and so fulfil the vocation of the Church as well. We reject the false doctrine that beyond its special commission the Church should and could take on the nature, tasks and dignity which belong to the State and thus become itself an organ of the State. We reject the false doctrine that with human vainglory the Church could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of self-chosen desires, purposes and plans. The Confessing 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 confederation of Confessing Churches. It calls upon all who can stand in solidarity with its Declaration to be mindful of these theological findings in all their decisions concerning Church and State. It appeals to all concerned to return to unity in faith, hope and love. Verbum Dei manet in aeternum. The Word of God will last for ever. Three Prophetic Challenges to the Church, published in by Wm. About this testimony The Barmen Declaration, , was a call to resistance against the theological claims of the Nazi state. In general, the churches succumbed to these pressures, and some Christians embraced them willingly. The pro-Nazi "German Christian" movement became a force in the church. They glorified Adolf Hitler as a "German prophet" and preached that racial consciousness was a source of revelation alongside the Bible. Not all Christians courageously resisted the regime, but many who did—like the Protestant pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Roman Catholic priest Bernhard Lichtenberg—were arrested and executed in concentration camps. The spirituality of the Barmen Declaration profoundly influenced many of the first generation of pastors and laypeople who formed the United Church of Christ in

**Chapter 6 : The Theological Declaration of Barmen**

*Barmen Confession Save The Barmen Declaration or The Theological Declaration of Barmen (Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung) was a document adopted by Christians in Nazi Germany who opposed the Deutsche Christen (German Christian) movement.*

There would no longer be state churches, but the churches remained public corporations and retained their subsidies from the state governments for services they performed on behalf of the government running hospitals, kindergartens etc. In turn, on behalf of the churches, the state governments collected church fees from those taxpayers enlisted as parishioners and distributed these funds to the churches. These fees were, and still are, used to finance church activities and administration. The theological faculties in the universities continued to exist, as did religious instruction in the schools, however, allowing the parents to opt out for their children. The governing structure of the churches effectively changed with the introduction of chairpersons elected by church synods instead of being appointed by the state. Accordingly, in this initial period of the Weimar Republic , in , the Protestant Church in Germany formed the German Evangelical Church Confederation of 28 regional or provincial churches German: Landeskirchen , with their regional boundaries more or less delineated by those of the federal states. The Nazi regime[ edit ] Many Protestants voted for the Nazis in the elections of summer and autumn and March There is a remarkable gap to the Catholic populated areas, where the results of the Nazis were lower, even after the Machtergreifung "seizure of power" of Hitler. The [Protestant] churches did not reject National Socialism on principle. The idea of a strong authority and a close bond between throne and altar, of the kind that existed in the empire between and , was in keeping with Protestant tradition. The German Christian movement was sustained and encouraged by factors such as: German Christianity emphasized the distinction between the visible and invisible church. For the German Christians, the church on earth was not the fellowship of the holy spirit described in the New Testament but a contrast to it, a vehicle for the expression of race and ethnicity. Creating a New National Church Deutsche Evangelische Kirche [ edit ] When the Nazis took power, the German Protestant church consisted of a federation of independent regional churches which included Lutheran, Reformed and United traditions. This had been one goal of many German Christians for some time, as centralization would enhance the coordination of Church and State, as a part of the overall Nazi process of Gleichschaltung "coordination", resulting in co-option. When the federation council met in May to approve the new constitution, it elected Friedrich von Bodelschwingh as Reichsbischof of the new Protestant Reich Church by a wide margin, largely on the advice and support of the leadership of the 28 church bodies. Among adherents of the Confessing Church these church bodies were termed intact churches German: Intakte Kirchen , as opposed to the German Christian-ruled bodies which they designated as "destroyed churches" German: Its membership grew [30] while the objections and rhetoric of the German Christians escalated. It expressly opposed the adoption of the Aryan Paragraph which changed the meaning of baptism. It distinguished between Jews and Christians of Jewish descent and insisted, consistent with the demands of orthodox Christianity, that converted Jews and their descendants were as Christian as anyone else and were full members of the Church in every sense. They and the synodals of their church bodies continuously refused to declare the merger of their church bodies in the German Evangelical Church DEK. The Barmen declaration became in fact the foundation of the Confessing Church, confessing because it was based on a confession of faith. It fought first to keep its organizational structures intact, and then to preserve the independence of church doctrine, according to which the Christian commandments were not to be subordinated to Nazi ideology The Kirchenkampf would now be continued on the basis of Church against State, rather than internally between two factions of a single church. The regime responded by: Positive Christianity is National Socialism That makes me laugh It was not a statement of rebellion against the regime or its political and social doctrines and actions. We totally deferred our political opposition to Nazism and tried to bring the church opposition to its feetâ€¦ We did it from a tactical standpointâ€¦ We hoped to bring [our brethren] to recognize the contradictions of being a Christian and a Naziâ€¦ so we deferred our political polemic against the Nazi state. While many leaders of the

Confessing Church attempted to persuade the church to take a radical stance in opposition to Hitler, it never adopted this policy. This often left Christians who did not agree with the Nazis without leadership. A select few of the Confessing Church risked their lives to help Jews hiding illegally in Berlin during the war. A hat would be passed around at the end of secret meetings into which the congregation would donate identity cards and passbooks. These were then modified by forgers and given to underground Jews so they could pass as legal Berlin citizens. Some urged the need for more radical and risky resistance action. Their efforts to prod the church to speak out for the Jews were unsuccessful. Why does it allow unspeakable injustice to occur? What shall we one day answer to the question, where is thy brother Abel? The only answer that will be left to us, as well as to the Confessing Church, is the answer of Cain. It was written by former members of Confessing Church mainly. The Nazi policy of interference in Protestantism did not achieve its aims. Both groups also faced significant internal disagreements and division. The Nazis gave up trying to co-opt Christianity and instead expressed contempt toward it. When German Christians persisted, some members of the SS found it hard to believe that they were sincere and even thought they might be a threat.

Chapter 7 : Presbyterian Mission Agency The Belhar Confession | Presbyterian Mission Agency

*In creed: Creeds and confessions today in this respect is the Barmen Declaration, formulated in by a group of Reformed and Lutheran churchmen in opposition to the Nazi-influenced "German Christians."*

Paul Ramsey, the Niebuhr brothers and Dietrich Bonhoeffer have also been given a new lease on their literary and theological lives as Christians have begun to discuss again notions of just war, political realism and public discipleship. His scholarship is well integrated with direct and personal knowledge of the Theses and the events that led to them. The book, in fact, is late to appear in English, being first published in in German as Die Barmen Thesen. The book itself is simply planned. Following are six chapters, each expounding one thesis, paying careful attention to the circumstances that gave rise to it. The result is a thoroughly situated, and therefore illuminated, Barmen Declaration. And as a result, readers will leave the book with a clearer understanding not only of what Barmen said in , but also what it continues to say in. And that, it seems to me, is the chief strength of the book. Reformed theology has often and rightly held that its confessions arise out of and speak to specific contexts. They are self-consciously time-bound documents and simply do not make sense without taking the circumstances of their construction into view. This is as true for the major Reformed Confessions - Heidelberg, Westminster and Dort - as the many, many minor ones. It is even true of such modern confessions as Barmen, whose context is much closer to our own. Reformed Confessions do not aspire to replace the great Creeds of Christendom that do, in fact, transcend their original historical and cultural boundaries. Sadly, in the move from seminary education to pastoral care, this often seems to be forgotten. Either confessions are so absolutized as to be treated as creedal documents that function in a context-independent way or they are so relativized as to be seen as silent in the modern era, speaking only to the context in which they were formed. On the one hand, he is very clear that Barmen is only understood in the context of Germany. Its theses take on new and subtle hues when we learn just how and why they were formulated, to whom and for whom. On the other, far from silencing Barmen this contextual situation actually frees it to speak fresh words today! It is only as we understand just what Barmen said to German Christians in that we can begin to grapple with what, if anything, it is saying to Christians in. And that, perhaps, is the most important insight of the book. The Barmen Declaration was not a declaration of the Church to the Nazis and still less, to the world at large. Barmen was a call from the Church in this instance, the Confessing Church to the Church in this instance, the German Christian Movement to be the Church in this instance, to refuse any compromise with Nazism. But it is also an important gift by a thoughtful theologian to a more general audience. For it invites us again to reflect on just what it means to be a disciple of Jesus here and how. And how much that discipleship costs. If ChristianWeek has made a difference in your life, please take a minute and donate to help give voice to stories that inform, encourage and inspire. Thank you, from Christianweek.

*Book of Confessions contain condemnations or derogatory characterizations of the Roman Catholic Church: Chapters XVIII and XXII of the Scots Confession; Questions and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism; and Chapters II, III, XVII, and.*

Its central doctrines concern the sin of idolatry and the lordship of Christ I. 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. 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! If you find that we are speaking contrary to Scripture, then do not listen to us! 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. 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. We are bound together by the confession of the one Lord of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic 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. 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. I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures. 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. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant. 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. The Church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things. 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. Westminster Press, , pp.

Chapter 9 : Barmen Declaration - Wikipedia

*The Barmen Declaration, , was a call to resistance against the theological claims of the Nazi state. Almost immediately after Hitler's seizure of power in , Protestant Christians faced pressure to "aryanize" the Church, expel Jewish Christians from the ordained ministry and adopt the Nazi "Führer Principle" as the organizing principle.*

You can read this confession here or learn more about its background here. The first part of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church U. Elders throughout the denomination, training for leadership, study each of the confessions, its historical origins, and its theological emphases. Our candidates for ministry must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the confessions on ordination exams and before their presbyteries. Why do we have and use such statements of faith? We have confessions because of the Scriptural precedent of being confessional. Presbyterians claim Scripture as the primary rule of faith and life, and Scripture quotes confessions from the early communities of faith. The New Testament records the earliest Christian creed: We have confessions because we are a community of believers, not a random collection of individuals. The Confessions both form and reflect our sense of community by describing our shared story and our common values. Confessions define what we as a community believe. These statements of faith proactively affirm our beliefs about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and about humanity, the church and the world the context in which God, humanity, and the church interact. They also reactively counter understandings prevalent in the surrounding culture that do not coincide with our faith. We have confessions because we are fallible human beings, prone to error, and inclined to forget who and whose we are. We need guidance and continual reminders about what we believe. Confessions develop out of a need to clarify beliefs and to contradict heresies. It reaffirms the historical Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ and confirms the Trinitarian nature of God. Three of our confessions the Scots, Second Helvetic, and Westminster Confessions and all three of our catechisms the Heidelberg and the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms developed out of the conflicts between newly emerging Protestantism and medieval Roman Catholicism. The Scots Confession condemned such medieval church abuses as the selling of indulgences, in which church members could pay sums of money to atone for sins prior to committing them. John Calvin inspired the writing of Second Helvetic Confession, which, like the famous technical precision of Swiss watches and clocks, describes the specifics of church work and administration. Nearly four centuries passed before the church formed and adopted another confession. Within the past six decades the church has embraced three new confessions: The Confession of frequently repeats the term reconciliation. In response to civil rights struggles, American involvement in Vietnam, and our first view of our planet from outer space, the church expressed a renewed commitment to reconciliation: A Brief Statement of Faith. Christians need instruction in the faith, because faith is not just a matter of the heart and soul; it is also a concern of the mind. The catechisms in our Book of Confessions the Heidelberg and the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms were written specifically as teaching tools, putting in question-and-answer form the common elements of faith according to the Reformed tradition. Not only the content but also the very existence of catechisms underscores the importance of teaching believers. Many Presbyterians over age 40 spent hours in childhood memorizing the Shorter Catechism and can still cite at least the first question: We have confessions because we are an evangelical church. We who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ have a mandate to share that Good News for the sake of the world. The confessions offer not only continuity, but also the content we have to define our community. The Book of Order states these purposes for our confessions: Our confessional statements serve as road maps to the Reformed faith. The confessions serve as a map that briefly describes us as a community and sets boundaries on the territory of the Reformed faith. If we travel outside those boundaries, we find ourselves in another city of faith. For example, a person who does not remember his infant baptism might request rebaptism. But rebaptism lies outside our boundaries, and instead we would affirm our understanding of the once-and-for-all nature of baptism, that is, the sacrament takes effect whether or not we remember it. When we are newcomers to a city we rely on a map to help us find our way around and avoid getting lost. As we live in that place and frequently travel from point to point, we become more and more familiar with its features and refer to the map less often. We know the

highways and byways, the side streets and dead ends, the safe areas and the places of danger. In any vital city there is growth, development and change. Certain parts of the city of faith also change with historical circumstances, so we create new maps write and adopt new confessions to help those who travel here find their way. This article originally appeared in the May issue of Presbyterians Today.