

**The Barmen Declaration and the American Church**

**A Warning and Guidance from History**

**by**

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## Introduction

The Barmen Declaration serves as a great example that the American Church should heed.<sup>1</sup> The American Church faces a hostile secular culture and a government that is increasingly statist and anti-Christian. The state has become an idol in an American culture that rejects truth and righteousness. A bold stance for truth and Christ is required by scripture and is the key to transforming the culture and saving the American Republic.

In the 1930s the believers of Germany faced the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.<sup>2</sup> The “German Christians” were the Church Leaders and professed Christians placed nationalism and statism above the truth of God by selling out to the Nazis.<sup>3</sup> The Confessional Church represented the faithful remnant who risked death by gathering together and making a formal rebuke to the German Christians and their embrace of the idolatry of Hitler.<sup>4</sup>

The Confessional Christians composed the Barmen Declaration which affirmed the truth of scripture.<sup>5</sup> the Barmen Declaration upheld that Christ and his Word must be followed above all others, the state has no authority over the church and the church must only be subject to the Holy Spirit and God’s Word.<sup>6</sup> (Colossians 1:18).<sup>7</sup> The Barmen Declaration was a timeless stance against statism and idolatry which upheld the truth that Christ comes before all.<sup>8</sup>

The German church was hindered in its response to Nazism by a long historical union with the state and the infection of the church with the modernistic thinking of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German School of Philosophy.<sup>9</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> Century German School of Philosophy gave rise to higher criticism and liberal theology, which undermined the German Church's belief in the

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<sup>1</sup> Sihombing, Fridz Pardamean, “The Contemporary Relevance of the Barmen Declaration to the Struggle of the Church in the Political Arena.” *The Ecumenical Review*. Vol. 61, No. 1 (2009): 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Rolf Ahlers, “The ‘Community of Brethren’ The Contemporary Significance of the Third Thesis of the Barmen Declaration.” *Calvin Theological Journal*. Vol. 20 (1985): 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas S. Bax. “The Barmen Theological Declaration: Its Historical Background.” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. Vol. 47 (June 1984): 13-14

<sup>4</sup> Heino Falcke. “What did the Barmen Declaration have to say to the churches of the German Democratic Republic?” *The Ecumenical Review*. Vol. 61, No. 1 (2009): 72-74.

<sup>5</sup> Ahlers, 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Ulrich Duchrow. “1984 in the Light of Article III of the Barmen Declaration Becoming a Confessing Church.” *International Review of Mission*. Vol. 73 (October 1984): 427-428, 434.

<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise noted all scriptural references in this paper are taken from the King James Version (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Weinrich. “God’s Free Grace and the Freedom of the Church: Theological Aspects of the Barmen Declaration.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. Vol. 12, No. 4 (October 2010), 410-412.

<sup>9</sup> Lutzer, Erwin W. *Hitler’s Cross*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995, 20-23.

authority of scripture, and gave rise to secular statism which produced Nazism, modern secularism, and communism.<sup>10 11</sup>

The impact of World War I and the Great Depression brought negative cultural and spiritual forces to the forefront.<sup>12</sup> However, they had been operating for generations. Those same forces are at work in America.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Barmen Declaration is an important lesson and guide for modern American believers.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Rise of Statism in Germany and the Corruption of the Church**

The Lutheran Church was the leading Protestant German denomination that had remained in a union with the State since the days of the Reformation.<sup>15</sup> The German Church became further connected to the German State after Prussia unified because the new Imperial government pressured Protestant Churches to unify under the state-endorsed Prussian Union Church.<sup>16</sup> The Confessional Lutherans and the Brethren Councils became the major independent Protestant groups in Germany in the 1800s.<sup>17</sup>

The problem was worsened by the rise of the 19<sup>th</sup> German School of Philosophy.<sup>18</sup> The school's primary beginning was with George Hegel's development of Hegelism while lecturing as a professor at the University of Heidelberg and Berlin from 1816–1831.<sup>19</sup> Hegel created a philosophical system that placed the state at the center of all society.<sup>20</sup> Hegel himself said that the State “has the supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 27-29.

<sup>11</sup> William I. Shirer. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 98-99, 110.

<sup>12</sup> Bax, 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Lutzer, 28-29.

<sup>14</sup> Sihombing, 53-54.

<sup>15</sup> Lutzer, 16-18

<sup>16</sup> Susannah Heschel. *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 15-17.

<sup>17</sup> Lowell Green. *Lutherans Against Hitler: The Untold Story*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 26-29.

<sup>18</sup> Shirer, 97-98.

<sup>19</sup> Lutzer, 25-27.

<sup>20</sup> Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism*. New York: Doubleday, 2007, 104, 117-119.

member of the State... for the right of the world spirit is above all special privileges.”<sup>21</sup>

Hegel’s system – Hegelism - became the foundation from which the entire 19<sup>th</sup> Century German School of Philosophy arose and developed.<sup>22</sup> The primary tenants of the German School of Philosophy are: (1) Socialism, not just economic but the State as the guiding force of society; (2) Evolution, (3) Higher Criticism attacking the authority of scripture and rejecting all objective morality sometimes replaced it with the idolization of science, (4) Group Identity – the lack of objective truth is replaced by requiring individuals to conform to their group status be racial, economic, religious, etc..., (5) the belief in "World Historical figures destined to bend history to their will, and 6) the mutability of man's nature and the state is the instrument for improving and perfecting man.<sup>23 24 25</sup>

Hegel was personally anti-Semitic and the entire 19<sup>th</sup> Century German School of Philosophy was touched by anti-Semitism.<sup>26</sup> The School's nationalism, racism, and anti-Semitism went hand in hand with the rejection of the Bible.<sup>27</sup> The reason the Bible could not be relied upon was that the Jews had twisted the Bible and the “real” scripture upheld the strong triumphing over the weak.<sup>28</sup> The philosopher Houston Chamberlin, who was the son in law of Richard Wagner, went so far as to proclaim Jesus as an Aryan figure denounce the Apostle Paul as a false teacher who had corrupted Jesus' teachings with "pagan" ideas.<sup>29</sup>

Hegelism was embraced by the Hohenzollern rulers of Prussia.<sup>30</sup> The Hohenzollerns liked the statism of Hegelism but failed to understand the extent to which it undercut Orthodox Christian teachings.<sup>31</sup> Hegelism quickly became dominant in German universities including

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<sup>21</sup> Shirer, 110-111.

<sup>22</sup> Lutzer, 25-27.

<sup>23</sup> George F.W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Translated by J. Sibree. (New York, NY: Willey Book Co., 1837).

<sup>24</sup> Shirer, 110-111.

<sup>25</sup> Herschel, 15-17.

<sup>26</sup> Nathan Rotenstreich, *The Recurrent Pattern: Studies in Anti-Judaism in Modern Thought*. (London, Horizon House, 1963), 48-52.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Steigman-Gall. *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90-92.

<sup>28</sup> Lutzer, 31-33.

<sup>29</sup> Steigman, 87-88.

<sup>30</sup> Herschel, 15-17.

<sup>31</sup> Ahlers, 9-10.

the seminars.<sup>32</sup> It served as the foundation for Marxism, Fascism, and the socialist democratic forces which govern Europe today.<sup>33</sup> All Christian denominations were compromised by the theological liberalism which arose out of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German School of Philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

The school spread over the continent and into America.<sup>35</sup> The American church was compromised but not as much in part because of the separation of Church and State. In America, the separation of Church and State had been established primarily by the efforts of Christians.<sup>36</sup> The ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German School of Philosophy took over the Ivy League schools and eventually took root in the American government.<sup>37</sup>

### **Impact of World War I and the Great Depression**

Theological liberalism, statism, and a wicked nationalism that placed the nation before God spread throughout the European churches.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the church leadership largely urged on the leaders as one nation after another joined in World War 1.<sup>39</sup> World War 1 was a classic example of a wicked driven by the pride and greed of leaders. None of the major powers had a biblical justification for war. The church should have been a voice for mercy and justice<sup>40</sup> Instead, most of the church leadership joined in the wicked calls for war.<sup>41</sup>

The behavior of the European churches in WWI set the foundation for the future apostasy of the "German Christians."<sup>42</sup> The church leaders had placed the government, worldly leaders, and the state before Christ. The only real difference was in degree because the "German Christians" would submit to the neo-pagan Nazis and the evil of Hitler.<sup>43</sup> The war

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<sup>32</sup> Goldberg, 218-220.

<sup>33</sup> Herschel, 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> Lutzer, 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> Goldberg, 104-105.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce Snavelly. *The Second Reformation*. (Lynchburg: Liberty University Press, 2013), 141-149.

<sup>37</sup> Malcolm D. Magee, *What the World Should Be*. (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 65-67.

<sup>38</sup> Ahlers, 19-20 and 30-31.

<sup>39</sup> Bax, 13-14

<sup>40</sup> H. Leon McBeth. *The Baptist Heritage Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 618-620.

<sup>41</sup> Magee, 71-72.

<sup>42</sup> Green, 28-30.

<sup>43</sup> Wolfgang Huber, "The Barmen Declaration and the Kairos Document." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. Vol. 75 (1991): 50-51.

ended with a German defeat but with all the major powers of Europe severely damaged.<sup>44</sup> The bitterness of the war fueled Europe's move toward secularism.<sup>45</sup>

America was not exhausted like the other powers and was in a position to shape events.<sup>46</sup> However, the Allies continued to blockade Germany even after the armistice went into effect on 11 November 1918 and the signing of the peace treaty on 28 July 1919.<sup>47</sup> The blockage was not ended until July 12, 1919.<sup>48</sup> Wilson went along with the continued blockade without protest.<sup>49</sup> The continued blockage results in continued shortages of food, medicine, and winter fuel which resulted in the estimated deaths of over 100,000 Germans and an unknown number of civilians in other countries like Austria.<sup>50</sup>

President Woodrow Wilson publicly argued for a compromised peace and claimed his goals were fair terms and lasting peace.<sup>51</sup> Wilson broke his word and went along with France and Great Britain's desire for a foolish treaty of vengeance.<sup>52</sup> A bitter irony is that Wilson had embraced the 19<sup>th</sup> German School Philosophy while a student at John Hopkins University and its teaching shaped his policies as President.<sup>53</sup> Germany was left humiliated, broken, and embittered by the defeat in war, the cruel blockade, and the Versailles peace treaty. All of which would later be used by Hitler as grievances to justify his evil agenda.<sup>54</sup>

German society continued to grow more secular and amoral during the 1920s as faith declined in reaction to World War I.<sup>55</sup> Germans saw events as proving God was not real and

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<sup>44</sup> Jim Powell, *Wilson's War*. (New York: Random House 2005), 160-162.

<sup>45</sup> Magee, 73-75.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Day, *Woodrow Wilson's Own Story*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952), 305-308.

<sup>47</sup> John B Judis, *The Folly of Empire*, (New York: Lisa Drew Book 2004), 128-130.

<sup>48</sup> Magee, 73-75.

<sup>49</sup> Day, 308-309.

<sup>50</sup> Powell, 138-139, and 158-159.

<sup>51</sup> Judis, 108-110.

<sup>52</sup> Donald Day, *Woodrow Wilson's Own Story*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952), 305-308.

<sup>53</sup> Goldberg, 43-48.

<sup>54</sup> Shirer, 52-60 and 80-90.

<sup>55</sup> Ahlers, 31-32.

that secular teachings were true.<sup>56</sup> The German Churches increasingly sought to embrace the culture rather than upholding biblical truth.<sup>57</sup>

The Great Depression hit in 1929 and fueled all the ongoing negatives currents and created great fear in Germany.<sup>58</sup> Germans struggled to survive day to day and believed themselves surrounded by hostile nations. The German people needed a savior but lacked faith in God.<sup>59</sup> They turned to the demonic figures of Hitler and the Nazis who represented the logical extreme of Hegelism and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German school of Philosophy.<sup>60</sup> They willingly gave up their liberty to him because they were not just choosing a leader but a false Messiah who offered himself and the state as the saviors of the German people.<sup>61</sup>

### **German Christians and the Confessional Church**

The German Christians were the Protestant churches that submitted to the Nazi regime and placed Hitler over Christ.<sup>62</sup> In 1921, the League for a German Church was organized within the Prussian Union.<sup>63</sup> The League stood for theological liberalism, a “German Christianity” and removing Jewish influence from the Church.<sup>64</sup>

The League was guided by the teachings of Friedrich Andersen, H.S. Chamberlin, and Adolf Bartels. Bartels introduced the term "German Christianity."<sup>65</sup> The League advocated dropping the entire Old Testament from the Canon of scripture due to its Jewish influence which they claimed made it unreliable and they also rejected the Paulian teaching of redemption.<sup>66</sup> Finally, they held that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross should be explained by German mysticism and not as a universal atonement.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Green, 38-40.

<sup>57</sup> McBeth, 791-800.

<sup>58</sup> Powell, 210-215.

<sup>59</sup> Huber, 49-50.

<sup>60</sup> Shirer, 92-97, 16-112, and 380-385.

<sup>61</sup> Duchrow, 428-429.

<sup>62</sup> Kenneth C Barnes, *Nazism, Liberalism, and Christianity: Protestant Social Thought in Germany and Great Britain, 1925-1937* (Lexington, KY University of Kentucky Press, 1991), 773-74.

<sup>63</sup> Lutzer, 55-57.

<sup>64</sup> Bax, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Barnes, 72-75.

<sup>66</sup> Heschel, 28-32.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



Throughout 1933, the German Christians won a series of elections to control the German Evangelical Church (Prussian Union) which was renamed the Reich Church.<sup>68</sup> Hitler's puppet Ludwig Muller was elected Reich bishop.<sup>69</sup> Muller and the German Christians embraced Hitler's claim to be both the civil and spiritual leader of Germany.<sup>70</sup>

The German Christians accepted Hitler as Messiah with a divine calling, empowerment, and who have received special revelation.<sup>71</sup> Jesus was redefined as an Aryan figure and his Hebrew heritage denied.<sup>72</sup> Churches even replaced pictures of Jesus with those Hitler and the Swastika replaced the Cross or the Cross was wrapped inside the Swastika in Reich Churches.<sup>73</sup>

Martin Niemoller, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer organized Protestant Evangelicals into the Confessional Church to uphold biblical principles and resist the takeover of the Protestant church by the German Christians.<sup>74</sup> The theological roots of the Confessional Church in large part are rooted in the teachings of Soren Kierkegaard.<sup>75</sup> Kierkegaard upheld the authority of scripture, individual faith in Christ, fought Hegelian group identity, and the compromise of the state churches.<sup>76</sup> He stressed the need for a personal relationship with Christ and confirmed to him and not to society. Kierkegaard helped uphold a faithful remnant in a largely unfaithful European Church.<sup>77</sup>

Karl Barth and the other Confessional Church leaders' theology was influenced by Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard rejected any moral division in life.<sup>78</sup> The powerful were not

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<sup>68</sup> Barnes, 110-15.

<sup>69</sup> Shirer, 235.

<sup>70</sup> Lowell C. Green. *Lutherans Against*, 56-59 and 73-77.

<sup>71</sup> Herschel, 235-239.

<sup>72</sup> Huber, 48-50.

<sup>73</sup> Heschel. *The Aryan Jesus*, 50-65.

<sup>74</sup> Green, *Lutherans Against*, 160-163 and 176-179.

<sup>75</sup> Weinrich, 405-407.

<sup>76</sup> Ojvind Larsen, "Kierkegaard's Critique of Hegel Existentialist Ethics Versues Hegel's Sittlichkeit in the Institutions of Civil Society of the State." <https://nome.unak.is/wordpress/08-3/c69-conference-paper/kierkegaard-s-critique-of-hegel-existentialist-ethics-versus-hegel-s-sittlichkeit-in-the-institutions-of-civil-society-of-the-state/> (last accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>77</sup> Barry Stocker. *Kierkegaard on Politics*. (New York, NY: Saint Martin's Press, 2014), 39-42, 48-54, 96-98, and 108-112.

<sup>78</sup> Ojvind.

justified to do wrong either by their position or goals.<sup>79</sup> Like Kierkegaard, Barth saw the need for Christianity to defend individualism and rise above the group to embrace the truth of Christ.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Barmen Declaration Articles 1-3**

The Barmen Declaration responds to the situation the Church found itself in the 1930s Nazi Germany.<sup>81</sup> However, the declaration was composed like a doctrinal confession and applied universal truths to the circumstances of that day. The declaration was organized into six articles each having a primary thesis. Each article was opened with a governing scripture followed by a statement of universal theological truth.<sup>82</sup> Then the truth was applied to reject a falsehood of the German Christians.<sup>83</sup>

The Barmen Declaration was adopted on 31 May 1934 by a Synod of Confessional Churches which included Reformed, Lutheran, and other faithful Protestant Germans.<sup>84</sup> Article one set forth that the church is guided by Christ and his Word and no other authority.<sup>85</sup> Karl Barth stated that Article One was written to reject the false natural theology of the German Christians.<sup>86</sup> Specifically, the false teaching that Hitler was sent by God and that he had received a new revelation from God.<sup>87</sup> Article One further refuted the German Christians' claim that Hitler's revelation must be reviewed as equal with scripture and obeyed without question.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Stocker, 39-42.

<sup>80</sup> Phillip G. Ziegler. "Barth's Criticisms of Kierkegaard – A Striking out at Phantoms?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. Vol. 9, No. 4 (October 2007), 443-450.

<sup>81</sup> Falcke, 72-73.

<sup>82</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 6 September 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Sihombing, 54-56.

<sup>84</sup> Bax, 15-16.

<sup>85</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 6 September 2015).

<sup>86</sup> Weinrich, 412-413.

<sup>87</sup> George Hunsinger. *Thy Word is Truth Barth on Scripture*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 223-225.

<sup>88</sup> Dean Stroud. *Preaching in Hitler's Shadow: Sermons of Resistance in the Third Reich*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 40-41.

Article One of the Barmen Declaration did not just rebut the falsehood of the German Christians.<sup>89</sup> It stood for a large biblical truth that the Church was one and was not divided by nationality.<sup>90</sup> The extreme nationalism and racism of the German Christians arose from a larger unbiblical division of the Church that had plagued the Church throughout the centuries. The divisions in the Church arose from idolatry.<sup>91</sup> The Bible shows the truth of God's true will. True dependence upon and obedience to Christ brings unity to the Church.<sup>92</sup>

The other falsehood addressed by article one is the false dualism that the Church had to choose a side between opposing nations and world systems.<sup>93</sup> Man's divisions between Germany and its European rivals and between different economic and political systems are not those of God.<sup>94</sup> The believer is a member of the eternal kingdom at all times and all nations and systems of man fall short of the Glory of God.<sup>95</sup> The Church must uphold God's truth and standards and ask all to believe in God and follow his will.<sup>96</sup>

The second article of the Barmen Declaration set forth that Jesus Christ is the savior and the Lord and has a full claim upon the entire lives of the believers.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the will of God and his Word govern the lives of believers in all aspects.<sup>98</sup> The believer must place obedience to God above obedience to any earthly authority.<sup>99</sup> The German Christians accepted the demands of Hitler that the church should only govern inner religious thoughts and practices.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 40-41, 63-64.

<sup>90</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 6 September 2015).

<sup>91</sup> Stocker, 39-42.

<sup>92</sup> Husinger, 227-231.

<sup>93</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 6 September 2015).

<sup>94</sup> Stroud, 41-42, 63-64.

<sup>95</sup> Stocker, 39-42.

<sup>96</sup> Heino, 72-74.

<sup>97</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 6 September 2015).

<sup>98</sup> Stocker, 34-35, 87-89,

<sup>99</sup> Stroud, 41-42, 63-64.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 74-76.

The third article of the Barmen Declaration held that the Church is headed by Christ alone, united with him, and unified as one body in Christ.<sup>101</sup> Further, membership of the Body of Christ is gained by faith in Christ alone and cannot be restricted by any earthly standard.<sup>102</sup> The third article rebuked the false German Christian teaching that the Church should be a national Church with membership determined by nationality, blood, and race rather than spirituality.<sup>103</sup>

The German Christians believed the Church was called to serve Germany and therefore, the Gospel must be proclaimed in the spirit of National Socialism.<sup>104</sup> The organization of life in this world was to be done by the national government with the aid of the Church.<sup>105</sup> The German Christians rejected the truth that the Church was to conform to the likeness of Christ but rather it would now conform to the likeness of the German State and Nation.<sup>106</sup>

### **The Barmen Declaration Articles 4-6**

The fourth article affirmed that Church officials serve the congregations.<sup>107</sup> It rejected the German Christians' claim that control of the Reich Bishop allowed Muller to command all others in the Church because Hitler was now the head of the Church.<sup>108</sup> The church was established by Christ and no governmental authority or doctrine established the Church. Therefore, each office in the Church had authority in the areas given to it by Christ.<sup>109</sup>

The German Christians raised the authority of the state to a divine level. It was a false idea rooted in the Hegelian view that the state was divinity on earth.<sup>110</sup> Thus, the state was in effect taking the place of the Holy Spirit. The view was blasphemous and idolatrous.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

<sup>102</sup> Stocker, 99-102.

<sup>103</sup> Duchrow, 427-428.

<sup>104</sup> Heschel, 138-140.

<sup>105</sup> Lutzer, 118-120.

<sup>106</sup> Weinrich, 410-413.

<sup>107</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

<sup>108</sup> Barnes, 118-120.

<sup>109</sup> Shirer, 118-122.

<sup>110</sup> Heschel, 198-202.

<sup>111</sup> Stroud, 64-68.

The German Christians treated the German Volk – nation as being the true Church rather than all those who have faith in Christ.<sup>112</sup>

The fifth article set forth that the Church had the duty to give the government its proper due but must place God first and fear him only.<sup>113</sup> The article rejected the idea that the state was the supreme lord of man and society was rebuked.<sup>114</sup> The Church's duty was to uphold the commission from Christ alone and not the direction of any other authority.<sup>115</sup>

The fifth article rejected the mythology of the state as a source of salvation a false current throughout history.<sup>116</sup> Mankind has long looked for salvation in this world and the state has been a common false vehicle for salvation.<sup>117</sup> Hitler presented himself as a personal Messiah leading the savior state. The Confessional Church rejected this falsehood.<sup>118</sup>

The sixth article of the declaration stated that the Church must carry out the work of the Lord and minister his Word in all things.<sup>119</sup> The article rejects the German Christian teaching that the Church is to serve the State and the nation.<sup>120</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, liberal and secular influences compromised the German Church and caused it to seek peace with the culture by toning down the truth of scripture.<sup>121</sup> The reality is that the failure to boldly preach the Word of God helped set the stage for the Church to lose its religious liberty.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Bax, 14-15.

<sup>113</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

<sup>114</sup> Falcke, 78-79.

<sup>115</sup> Huber, 53-54

<sup>116</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

<sup>117</sup> Stocker, 119-121.

<sup>118</sup> Falcke., 77-78.

<sup>119</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

<sup>120</sup> Herschel. *The Aryan Jesus*, 50-60.

<sup>121</sup> Green, 89-92.

<sup>122</sup> Lutzer. *Hitler's Cross*, 59-69.

The Barmen Declaration was rooted in the truth that all man was made in the image of God and that Christ died for all man. (Genesis 1:17 and John 3:16).<sup>123</sup> God commands his true Church to follow the Great Commission no matter what forces on Earth which oppose the Church. (Matthew 28:16-20). Thus, the whole Word of God must be preached and not compromised for the Word of God will always be an offense to the World.<sup>124</sup>

## Conclusion

The Confessional Church's Barmen Declaration provides a needed example for the modern American Church. The modern American Church is faced with a statist idolatry in the culture and within the Church. The idolatry and desire to appease wicked American culture are strongly present in the American Church.<sup>125</sup>

The American government increasingly claims lordship over the Church and spiritual matters while rejecting the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence and embracing a Hegelian view in which the government is the Lord of society. Group rights like that gay marriage are beginning to be used to deny individual rights like freedom of speech and religion.<sup>126</sup>

Christian organizations and individuals face increasing pressure to conform to the demands of Secular Statism. Today that means embracing the lie that there are more than two sexes or sex is mutable. Denying the truth to please the state is placing the state before God. The American Church must make its choice to serve and honor God and reject idolatry.<sup>127</sup>

The Barmen Declaration set forth the timeless principles which can guide the Church through these dark times. It affirmed the truth that Christ and his Word must be followed above all others, the state has no authority over the church and the church must only be subject to the Holy Spirit and God's Word. The Barmen Declaration represents the truth that believers must stand against statism and idolatry because Christ comes before all.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Stroud, 41-42, 65-67.

<sup>124</sup> Heino, Falcke. "What did the Barmen," 79-81.

<sup>125</sup> Watts, Craig M. <https://www.redletterchristians.org/the-nationalistic-corruption-of-worship-in-america/> (last accessed 30 March 2021).

<sup>126</sup> Hadley Arkes. <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2020/06/a-morally-empty-jurisprudence>. (last accessed 29 March 2021).

<sup>127</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

<sup>128</sup> The Theological Declaration of Barmen. <http://www.westpresa2.org/docs/adulted/Barmen.pdf> (Accessed 25 March 2021).

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