“We Went Astray” Protestant Church Leaders Reevaluate Church and State in Postwar Germany from 1945-1950

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Introduction

“We went astray when we began to dream about a German special mission, as if the German character could heal the world.”

“We went astray when we began to set up a “Christian Front” against new developments which had become necessary in social life.”

“We went astray when we thought we ought to create a political front of good against evil, light against darkness, justice against injustice, and to resort to political methods.”

“We went astray when we failed to see that the economic materialism of Marxist teaching ought to have reminded the Church of its task and its promise for the life and fellowship of men.”

From Statement by the Council of Brethren of the Evangelical Church of Germany Concerning the Political Course of Our People (“Darmstadt Statement.”)¹

In the aftermath of one of the most devastating wars in human history, the Protestant Church in Germany was faced with a myriad of problems. Not only did they have to attend to the needs of their parishioners, most of whom were without many basic necessities, but they also had to face issues of guilt, charges of anti-Semitism, reconstructing the Church, living in a divided and conquered nation, and having to explain their lack of political action during the rise of National Socialism. For the

postwar Church, that burden fell upon the leaders of the former Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche), for it was they who had offered the greatest “resistance” to Nazi rule. Beginning in 1945, members of this group sought to prevent the rise of any future regimes similar to the Nazis. Many Protestant Church leaders felt that the rise of National Socialism and World War II had been caused by a variety of factors. These factors included a rise in secular values (which they traced back to the French Revolution), and the conditions set by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the World War I. Thus, they focused on trying to influence Allied policies during the Reconstruction period. The vast majority rejected the views presented by a select minority of pastors, that the Church’s own prejudices toward Jews, unwavering loyalty to the state, and failure to take action, had allowed Nazi leadership to lead the country into another war and murder millions of innocent victims. In this thesis, I argue that this select minority prevented the Church from returning to its old habits after the war, particularly with the Church’s relationship to the state. This group of pastors tried to rebuild Christian roots in the community, become involved in political affairs and debates (especially surrounding the rising tension between American and the Soviet Union), and engage in a process of introspection through confessions of guilt. Although these pastors were in the minority, their critical remarks challenged other pastors’ preconceptions and incited significant debate. An example of the type of self-critical statements produced by this second group of pastors is provided above, in the quotes taken from the “Darmstadt Statement.”

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3 Germany was deemed solely responsible for the First World War at the peace talks in Versailles, and consequently was forced to pay Britain and France (amongst others) millions in war reparations (amongst other things). This severely crippled the German economy and led to massive inflation in the early 1920’s. Many Germans and historians alike accredited this to the rise of National Socialism, because it set conditions in which people would readily agree to extremist movements.
However, during my research I found that simply labeling pastors as part of the first group (“conservative”) or second group (“reformer”) was problematic. Pastors often were willing to reconsider their position in one particular area (for example, guilt for not resisting the Nazi regime), but not another (for example, their sentiments toward Jews and the Nazis’ “Jewish Question”). It is for this reason I have chosen to avoid the terms “conservative” and “moderate” to describe members of the clergy, as often used by other historians (particularly Matthew Hockenos). These terms create a false sense of understanding. For example, when one thinks of a “moderate,” one might think of a person who compromises, or doesn’t represent extreme positions. However, Hans Asmussen, whom Hockenos refers to initially as a “reformer” and later as a “moderate” (he marks a change in Asmussen’s writings after the war), does not subscribe to this definition of “moderate.” Asmussen’s arguments for the Protestant Church to stay out of political affairs fit firmly into the “conservative” bracket, yet his forthrightness in expressing guilt can be seen as part of the “reformist” section of the Church. Neither of these positions represented a middle ground in either dispute. The only term I choose to keep was “reformer,” primarily because there was a small but powerful minority that pressed for changes in the Church in the postwar period. However, even the use of this term can be problematic, as reformers may not have always actively sought reform in every area discussed (like Asmussen). Nevertheless, I found it necessary to differentiate this group of pastors from the majority, and do so, on a subject-by-subject basis. By taking pastors such as Asmussen out of these preconceived categories, one gains a greater respect for their individual opinions, and comes to realize that although Church leaders

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4 For Asmussen and guilt see Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 77. For Asmussen and political challenges see Hockenos, Matthew. Pg 60.
may have been allied on one subject, they were very often opponents on the next. Through this de-categorization of sorts, I hope to provide greater insight into the topics presented in this thesis.

This categorization (used by Matthew Hockenos) of pastors was also problematic because it separated the clergy into what seemed to be competing political parties as opposed to a united body. While it is certainly true that Church leaders disagreed on many issues, in general I feel that they disagreed more as colleagues rather than as opponents seeking to defeat one another. In general, these men were all united in their faith in God and Jesus Christ, and wished to remain part of a united German Protestant Church.

One might then ask: Why did the Protestant Church seek to reform its policies? This generally had to do with the Church’s conduct during the war. The Protestant Church during the Third Reich can essentially be separated into three groups. The first was the aforementioned Confessing Church. Members of this group opposed certain aspects of Nazi policy, and fought against the attacks made by the German Christians (Deutsche Christen) on the Bible. This second group, the radically anti-Semitic German Christians, dramatically altered Christian beliefs to suit their own racial agenda. The final portion of the clergy was by and large the biggest, roughly 80% of the 18,000 pastors, maintained a somewhat “neutral” position during the Third Reich.

Although the Confessing Church constituted less than one-third of the clergy,\(^5\) they quickly took control of the Protestant Church toward the end of the war. The Confessing Church began as an extension of the Pastors’ Emergency League (PEL), which was formed in September of 1933, in response to the attacks on Church doctrine.

\(^5\) Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 5.
by the German Christians (Deutsche Christen). The PEL actively opposed the radical theological ideals and storm-trooper tactics of the German Christians, who had seized power during the Church elections of 1933. However, the Confessing Church itself was often divided on matters of theology. This primarily had to do with the set-up of the Protestant Church in Germany, or the DEK (Deutsche Evangelische Kirche). The DEK organized the 27 regional churches (Landeskirchen), and was composed of three separate groups, the Lutheran Churches, the Reformed (Calvinist) Churches, and the United (a mixture of both Lutheran and Calvinist) Churches. The division of these theological groups was not equal. Thirteen of the regional churches were entirely Lutheran, and the Evangelical Church of the Union (which was composed of 6 regional churches), was also predominately Lutheran. This obviously meant that a majority of the pastors in the DEK were Lutheran. Nonetheless, leadings pastors like the Swiss-born Karl Barth (Reformed) also had a significant effect on Church theology. The theological differences between Calvinism and Lutheranism may seem minor in comparison to the differences between Catholic and Protestant, but for a majority of pastors these distinctions were extremely important. These distinctions were also important, if in complicated fashion, to understanding the pastors’ perspectives in the immediate postwar period.

To be considered a Lutheran, one had to agree to a variety of tenets passed down from the 1500’s, each with specific guidelines or interpretations of scripture. Over time, Lutherans developed new interpretations for some of these tenets, which resulted in

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6 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 12.
7 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 11-12.
8 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 4.
9 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 8.
theological disputes within Lutheranism.\textsuperscript{10} Calvinists, on the other hand, had their own set of tenets and beliefs, which often clashed with Lutheran theology. For example, Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone meant that one did not have to perform any specific deed or work in order to be absolved from sin. However, Calvinist doctrine focused on the outward signs of faith. Historian Matthew Hockenos says “Calvinists believed that God absolved man in order to free him to serve God…Calvin maintained that the works God did through man were signs of salvation.”\textsuperscript{11} There are many other examples of slight differences in the two denominations. Some of the most controversial were the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, the law-Gospel dualism, the doctrine of the divine orders, and the theory of supersessionism.\textsuperscript{12} For this essay, I primarily focused on the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, because it played an important role in defining the Protestant Church’s political stance.

These theological differences often prevented the Confessing Church from presenting a united stance. One area that was especially problematic for Lutheran and Reformed leaders was that of political activism. The Two Kingdoms doctrine limited Lutherans’ interaction in the political arena. Luther says that the secular powers of the world have a certain divine status so that they can preserve order. Without government, the world would descend into chaos. As such, the Church had no place in attacking the state’s God-given authority.\textsuperscript{13} For many Lutheran leaders, this meant they had to be extremely careful of any criticism of the state, and consequently this sparked theological arguments between the Reformed and Lutheran leaders. In each of the following four

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\textsuperscript{10} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 6.
\textsuperscript{11} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 133.
\textsuperscript{12} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 9.
\textsuperscript{13} Sockness, B. W. Luther's two kingdoms revisited: a response to Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of Luther. \textit{The Journal of Religious Ethics} v. 20(Spring 1992) p. 93-110 Pg. 2-5.
chapters, I traced the effect of this doctrine on the various Church leaders’ views, and the resulting effect it had in rebuilding the postwar Church.

The first chapter primarily focuses on outlining the various factions of Church leaders from 1933-1945. Because this is not the primary focus of this thesis, I rely heavily on the work of other historians to provide the necessary background for the subsequent discussion of the postwar period. Also included in this chapter is significant biographical information about some of the Church’s essential members in the postwar and antebellum periods, and discussion of the writings of one such pastor, Martin Niemöller. I focus on Niemöller’s writings for two reasons. Firstly, he was one of the most well-known and active leader in the Church both before and after the Nazis. The second reason is to demonstrate the transformation of political thought from the Nazi period to the postwar, which Niemöller’s writings particularly demonstrated.

The second chapter deals with the political discussion that began to take place in 1945, as well as mapping out the general restructuring of the Church after the war. The traditional Lutheran interpretation of the Two Kingdoms doctrine came under fire from a minority portion of the clergy interested in reforming the Church’s political influence. As a result, numerous questions were raised as to how a Christian should behave within the political sphere. To trace these debates I consider published writings from Martin Niemöller, Karl Barth, and Otto Dibelius. I also use sources from the Central Protestant Church Archive (Evangelisches Zentralarchiv) in Berlin, and an official statement from the Church entitled, *Message to the Congregations*.

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14 The three most prominent, are Matthew D. Hockenos, and his book *A Church Divided*, Doris Bergen’s *A Twisted Cross*, and Richard Steigmann-Gall’s *The Holy Reich*.
The third chapter is in many ways an extension of the second, as the rising tensions of the Cold War kindled a discussion about capitalism and communism, and the Church’s role in such a global conflict. A majority of the Protestant clergy sided with the American ideology, primarily because of their distrust of the strong secular message attached to communism. However, a small minority argued the social benefits of communism better served Christianity as a whole. To document this discussion, I use the writings of Karl Barth, Hans Asmussen, and Hans Iwand, as well as additional sources from the Church archive. I also discuss in greater detail the document quoted at the beginning of this introduction, *The Statement by the Council of Brethren of the Evangelical Church of Germany Concerning the Political Course of Our People.*

The final chapter deals with the topic of guilt, and the Allied charge of a “collective guilt.” I then move into a subsequent discussion on how to address the rampant anti-Semitism within the Church that had so easily lent itself to the Nazi cause. Many prominent pastors commented on at least one of these issues, and included within this chapter are writings from Hermann Diem, Martin Niemöller, Theophil Wurm, and Karl Barth. Also included are the official Church statements: *The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, Statement on the Jewish Question,* and *Message Concerning the Jewish Question.*

To conclude this introduction, I would like to pass on a parting note to those not familiar with the German language. I have consistently translated the German word *evangelisch* as *Protestant,* although a significant number of sources translate it as *evangelical.* I did so because the connotation of evangelical in English is generally associated with a sort of zealous enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel that simply does not exist in the German. Therefore, I must caution the reader to avoid such correlations,
as one will see in the remainder of this work that many of the translated sources I cite use evangelical as the translation for *evangelisch*, despite the difference in meaning.
Chapter I. The Protestant Church and the Third Reich

“The state and nation are God, and I am state and nation. Therefore I am God.”

The events of the Holocaust are still difficult to fathom, despite the fact that they occurred over sixty years ago. Modern historians still ask how such an event could have ever taken place in a nation with a long history of religious morality. After all, Germany was once the fatherland to Martin Luther, who accused the almighty Catholic Church of corruption on the basis of faith and biblical morality. Surely the Protestant Church, an institution that was supposed to preach the “good news” to all peoples, would never have stood idly by and watched a deranged tyrant ravage Europe? Unfortunately, what resistance was offered by the Protestant Church was not enough to prevent Hitler’s rise to power.

Today, when one looks at the role of the Protestant Church during the Third Reich, one often sees the heroes who did have the courage to stand up against the Nazi state, namely such figures as Dietrich Bonhoeffer (who was executed just before the war ended) and Martin Niemöller, who would become the figurative faces of the new EKD (Evangelische Kirche Deutschland) to be formed after 1945. However, the truth of the matter is that even the Confessing Church, which would be viewed by the Allies after the war as an institution that resisted Hitler, was far from a staunch defender of Christian

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15 This is the phrase Thomas Mann used to describe Hitler in the preface of Martin Niemöller’s *God is my Führer*, a collection of his sermons from 1936-1937.
16 Modern Scholars still seek understanding to this question. Both Donald L. Dietrich, the editor of *Christian Responses to the Holocaust*, and Robert P. Ericksen with Susannah Heschel in *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ask how Christians could have betrayed their own teachings, such as “love thy neighbor” during the Nazi period.
precepts in dark times, but rather a minority conglomerate that opposed certain aspects of Nazi policy and the state’s encroachments upon Church autonomy. On the other end of the spectrum were the “Deutsche Christen” or German Christians, who developed a rather unique role in an attempt to reconcile Christian theology with Nazi ideology. Their beliefs placed them into an unusual position. They were both an arm of Nazi propaganda (as they inserted Nazi ideals into Christian imagery and theology), and enemies of the truest Nazi proponents, for their failure to abandon Christianity altogether. In 1933, these two factions initiated a conflict for control of the Protestant Church. A third portion of the clergy, which was by far the largest, chose to abstain from the so-called Kirchenkampf (Church struggle), and were either too disillusioned with the warring sides to make a firm commitment, or simply wished to withdraw from the theological disputes. All three categories of German Protestant leaders would play a role in the Church’s actions during the Third Reich, and only by understanding the position held by each of these groups can one hope to gain any insight into the future of the Protestant Church in a post-war Germany.

The goal of this chapter is not to fully examine the roles of the Protestant Church during the Third Reich, but rather to highlight the Church’s important movements and figures from 1933-1945, in order to better understand their positions after the dust of one of the most destructive wars in history had settled. To do so I will use some of the most prominent works of German historians along with important Church proclamations, like

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18 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 6. The approximate percent of clergy that did not join either the Confessing Church or the German Christian movement was around 80%. This meant that a majority of Church leaders tried to go on with business as usual, and neither opposed Nazi Church policy in any significant manner, nor joined the ambitious German Christian movement.
the Barmen Declaration, in order to outline the posture of the Church during the war. Beginning with the German Christians and the effects of their short tenure as the elected spiritual leaders of Germany, and following with the Confessing Church and the “neutral” clergy, I hope to provide sufficient background for the subsequent discussion of the Church and its political and theological changes after the war.

The German Christian movement is a challenging group to discuss, because members attempted to merge together two ideologies that seem completely incompatible in every way. They were opposed by members of the Nazi hierarchy (such as Heinrich Himmler, and Martin Bormann), as well as prominent Church theologians and Nazi “opponents,” such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller, Karl Barth, and Hermann Diem. At its core the German Christian movement can be best described as an attempt to make it possible for Christianity to exist within Nazism. This was done through attempts to morph Christian teachings and imagery in order to demonstrate an ostensible compatibility to Nazism. The most important transformation was the image of Christ, as German Christians would reclassify him as an Aryan who desired the downfall of Judaism. The idea that Christ was an Aryan actually stemmed from conversations philosophers and theologians had had about the historical Jesus in the early 1900s. Jesus’ teachings were found to be too similar to other contemporary radical Jewish rabbis for the comfort of “racial advocates,” and consequently they sought to differentiate Jesus by making him Aryan. This “Aryan Jesus” would take on many of the Nazi ideals, which

21 By this term I mean those who advocated the purity of the German race.
22 Heschel, Susannah. Pg. 77.
can be readily seen through a change in Christian imagery advanced by the German Christians.

The German Christians forged this idea of the Aryan model, and easily built upon the old Christian charge of deicide, to further its own anti-Semitic agenda. A prime example of this is the Martin-Luther-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin-Mariendorf. Completed in 1935, the church was founded by Hermann Rieger and Max Kurzreiter. They originally hoped to remain “neutral”, but eventually these two men became involved in the Nazis’ Christian art program. Some general ideas perpetrated by the art program were the use of the Prussian iron cross in designs, images perpetuating the Nazi family view (such as an Aryan mother with her child in place of a Jewish Mary with baby Jesus) and modern-day soldiers worshiping an “Aryan Christ”. In turn, the sculptures and pictures of a Christ as a suffering servant were removed, replaced with images of a proud and triumphant son of God. It also became common for swastikas to be seen in the Church, often inserted within artwork such as the Arch of Triumph (“Triumphbogen”) in Mariendorf. This change to a racially defined Church clearly coincided with the Nazi agenda, but should not be dismissed as part of a Nazi vision. While this new world order created by the German Christians built upon old racial and religious prejudices along with glorifying soldiers may have helped to fuel the Nazi war machine, it was not part of a larger Nazi agenda. Actually it was quite the opposite, as in 1937 Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Security Police and head of the intelligence section of the SS, outlawed

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23 By neutral I mean not actually members of the German Christians or the confessing Church, but rather neutral clergy.


25 By this term I mean the Church began looking at the ancestry of its members and specifically, its pastors. The emphasis on an Aryan Christ in Church architecture is evidence of this taking place. A key debate that arose between the Confessing Church and the German Christians was the treatment of former Jews who had been baptized. I will discuss this more later.
German Christians from displaying the Nazi swastika with any form of the Christian Cross. This distinction is vital to understanding the German Christians, as they did not simply represent a group of Christians who conformed to Nazi ideology, but rather they took some of the values of Nazism, like racial purity and nationalism, and inserted them into their own twisted version of Christianity.

The German Christian rise to power coincided with Hitler’s own “seizure” of the German nation. In July of 1933 Hitler publically supported Ludwig Müller in the election for the newly created post of Reich bishop, which was open to any registered Protestant, and as a result the German Christians achieved extraordinary success in ensuing elections. From 1933-1934 they won control of every regional Church except for three (Bavaria, Hannover, and Württemberg), and quickly wrested control of the majority of the Church body, including its largest district in Prussia. This takeover by the German Christians created resentment between them and other Church pastors, because not only did they gain positions of high authority, they quickly attempted to replace non-German Christian pastors with those that were. In addition, the German Christians also sought to redistrict the regional branches of the Church into one large Reich Church, directly under the state umbrella. Indeed, opposing Church leaders initially equated the restructuring of the Church as a German Christian philosophy and consequently viewed them as the primary opponents to their sovereignty and future instead of the state.

26 Bergen, Doris. Pg. 117.
28 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 19.
29 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 20.
30 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg 17-18.
Once in power, the German Christians wasted no time in attempting to bring their vision of a racially pure Church to life. Practically speaking, this meant that they needed to eliminate all non-Aryans from the Church. This created problems amongst Protestants when discussing converted Christians or those with Jewish ancestry, not because they necessarily felt compelled to stick up for those of Jewish origin, but rather because they were appalled with the audacity of this new group to change policy that had been long since established. They viewed this as an attack on the sacred act of baptism, which challenged its ordained power from God. In order to rationalize their actions, the German Christians needed to establish a theology that would support their beliefs. Historian Doris Bergen explains “The German Christians believed that God revealed himself to humanity not only in Scripture and through Jesus but in nature and history…Accordingly, they saw establishment of a purely “Aryan” people’s church as a God-given task to be completed…”³¹ Therefore, their belief system demanded a change in policies in regards to who, and who was not, to be included into the Church. If the Church doctrine is to be defined through nature and by extension race, and the Aryan race is seen to be the highest pinnacle of that nature, then it only stands to reason that the movement must include only members of the Aryan race, or at least Aryan members maintaining authority. Consequently, one can clearly see the logical outcome, as any non-Aryan member of the Church, even if baptized, was to be removed.

To ensure this, the German Christians did two important things. The first was to issue a standard that all priests and pastors had to be Aryan. Although the number of pastors with a Jewish family history was relatively small, their removal from office was

³¹ Bergen, Doris. Pg. 11.
difficult to swallow for the other Church leaders.\textsuperscript{32} The second was to create the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Religious Life. The institute would produce a number of works that ventured to eliminate the presence of Judaism in Christianity. These included a “dejudaized” New Testament, a “dejudaized” Hymnal, and various other pamphlets and documents that explained and encouraged the German Christian ideology.\textsuperscript{33} This essentially completed the transformation of the Church for the majority, and left the Confessing Church, many of whom assuredly sympathized with Hitler and parts of the German Christian message, with a myriad of problems when attempting to confront the attack on the Gospel and more traditional Christian customs.

After the war most members of the Confessing Church heralded themselves as defenders of true Christianity, since they opposed the methods and some of the beliefs of the German Christians. However, to simply label them as a true group of resistance against the German Christians and by extension the Nazis is far from accurate. Historian Matthew Hockenos notes that “Protestant leaders admired Hitler’s courage in attacking atheistic leftists and liberals and believed his goals were similar to theirs.”\textsuperscript{34} That is not to say all Confessing Church leaders were Hitler supporters, but even ones like Niemöller who would take on a large role as a reformer after the war, initially did not believe Hitler to be a threat to Christianity. Assuredly, Confessing Church leaders were no great protectors of Judaism, and even those who would be heralded as ardent protectors of Jews demonstrated an acceptance for anti-Jewish sentiment in the early stages of the Nazi rise to power.

\textsuperscript{32} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 19-20.  
\textsuperscript{33} Heschel, Susannah. Pg. 72-73.  
\textsuperscript{34} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 18.
Further complicating the issue for Confessing Church leaders was the strict adherence to a piece of theology from Martin Luther, known as the “Zwei Reiche” or Two Kingdoms. Luther’s ideas ordained the place of the state as the keepers of order and civility. The common Lutheran interpretation of this meant that it was not the Church’s place to not get involved in challenging the state’s authority on matters of politics, an idea a majority of Lutheran pastors, especially the more conservative ones, took very seriously. All of these factors, in addition to infighting and the perceived danger and fear that one faced when opposing the Nazis, would limit the response and effectiveness of the Confessing Church’s resistance. That said, the Confessing Church did oppose a number of aspects of Nazism, mainly the formation of a Reich Church, the “euthanasia” project, and the imprisoning of Church officials and congregation members who dared to speak out. However, by the time leaders like Niemöller recognized the danger behind the Nazi regime and its threat to Christian teachings, it was too late to prevent state encroachment on Church autonomy.

The Church’s realization of this danger was gradual, and by the time most Church leaders became aware of what Hitler was attempting to do to Christianity and the German State, the time for any significant attempt to curtail state power had passed. As previously mentioned, in 1933 a majority of Church leaders welcomed Hitler and the Nazis. Church leaders thought they would bring stability, restore pride to the German nation, and limit the perceived influence of Judaism and communism. They accredited their misgivings about Hitler to the German Christians, and believed that they prevented

35 It should be noted that while Church leaders and members may have been afraid to stand up to Nazi policy, they did so successfully on two accounts, one was the release of Bishops Wurm and Meiser in 1935, the other in protest to the T4 or euthanasia program in early 1941. See Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 160-168 and Pg. 200-202.
them from engaging in constructive conversation with Hitler. Although Hitler distrusted all Church leaders and often refused to meet with them in any capacity, he actually did not see the Protestant Church as an enemy to the state, at least initially. He was more then willing to let the Protestant Church be, so long as its members obeyed his commands. In fact, most of the initial persecution of Church leaders came from the German Christians, namely Ludwig Müller. In 1935, Hitler actually stepped in to revoke the house arrests of Bishops Theophil Wurm and Hans Meiser of the Confessing Church, because of public protests. It was not until 1937, with the state under criticism from pastors like Martin Niemöller, that Hitler began to take political action against the Protestant Church.

The Confessing Church primarily ran into problems with Hitler because they failed to realize his absolutism. As historian Richard Steigmann-Gall describes, “Finally he [Hitler] warned that, if pastors wanted to declare resistance, this would not make them his ‘most loyal opposition,’ but rather ‘Germany’s destroyers’…” By rejecting the notion of a “loyal opposition,” Hitler also betrayed his belief that opposition to any one

36 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 17-19.
38 Hitler viewed the Protestant Church as part of a great tradition of German superiority. He was particularly found of Luther for his condemnation of Rome and the Jews, and although he was obviously not Christian, he had little desire to abolish the Protestant Church. See Steigmann-Gall, Richard. The Holy Reich. Pg. 160-168.
39 Hitler makes a great distinction between the Protestant Church and the Catholic Church, the latter of which he attacked much more ferociously. See Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 160-168.
40 Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 166.
41 Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 173-175.
42 Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 155.
43 Loyal opposition is the term Hitler’s aides used to describe the Confessing Church. They were considered to be loyal to the state even though they opposed certain Nazi policies. As a result of this clarification, they were given a bit more freedom in what they could and could not say in the early years of the Third Reich. See Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg 170.
Nazi policy was opposition to Nazism as a whole.\textsuperscript{44} Hitler’s absolutism would eventually seal the downfall of the Confessing Church. Although the Confessing Church was willing to remain loyal to the state, members wanted to abolish German Christian theology and insure their own autonomy. They rejected the idea of a Reich Church because many wanted to maintain their separate Church denominations for theological reasons.\textsuperscript{45} Their continued protest of these things eventually brought them under fire from Hitler, and by that time his control of the nation was complete. Hitler’s use of the German Christians\textsuperscript{46} and other political forces shrouded his true intentions.\textsuperscript{47} Even in 1935, most Church leaders had no idea of the horror that was to follow in the next decade. By 1938, Hitler had more or less effectively limited free speech and silenced oppositional forces.\textsuperscript{48}

Before discussing some of the intricacies of the Confessing Church’s actions, it’s important to familiarize oneself with some of the most important figures of the resistance, particularly those who would have a large impact on the reconstruction of the Church after the war; namely Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller, and Karl Barth. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is by far the most well-known resistance leaders against the Nazis, recognized by many others aside from Christians in Germany, as a heroic voice against the Nazi racial policy. From the onset of Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer was one of the only pastors who spoke out against the anti-Semitic values of the Nazi regime, as he found the moral foundations of such laws to be against his beliefs. Bonhoeffer was

\textsuperscript{44} Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 170-171.
\textsuperscript{45} Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 164.
\textsuperscript{46} In this I mean how Hitler used the German Christian movement in 1933 to further his anti-Semitic agenda and tie the Church to the state. He would withdraw his support for their movement the following year, and ultimately desired the removal of Christianity. Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 16-33. See also Bergen, Doris. \textit{The Twisted Cross}.
\textsuperscript{47} By true intentions I do not mean the destruction of the Protestant Church, but rather the abolition of Christianity outside of Nazi influence. Hitler simply wanted to ensure the Church was loyal to him, and to reorganize the Church to be more easily monitored.
\textsuperscript{48} Kershaw, Ian. Pg 212-213.
declared an enemy of the state in 1936 for his voice against the German Christians and Nazi policies, and as a result was exiled from Berlin in 1938. He actually left for America in 1939, accepting a position with friends to preach in New York. However, his moral conscience dictated that he return to Germany to “share the trials of this time with his people.” After fiercely preaching against the Nazis, he was forbidden from public speaking in 1940.\textsuperscript{49} He was arrested in 1943 when the Gestapo discovered his involvement with other members of the Confessing Church Martin Albertz, Heinreich Grüber, and Hermann Mass, for smuggling baptized Jews out of the country. He was also involved in a plan to assassinate Hitler with Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and Major General Hans Oster, and when his full role had been determined, he was executed on April 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.\textsuperscript{50} Less than a month later the Allies accepted Germany’s complete surrender.

Martin Niemöller has perhaps the most complex and interesting role of any Church leader of the era. A founder of the Confessing Church, Niemöller was strongly opposed to the glorifying of Hitler and the Nazi church policy. That said, he also held a strong nationalistic sentiment, and served as a U-Boat helmsman during the First World War.\textsuperscript{51} Although not especially critical of the Nazi anti-Semitism or of the regime in the way Bonhoeffer was, Niemöller was imprisoned in 1937 for his refusal to accept the Church’s subordination to the state. He spent the remainder of the war as a personal prisoner of Hitler, first in Sachsenhausen, then in Dachau (1941). Hitler in particular was outraged with Niemöller’s refusal to submit to him, and ordered his imprisonment despite the fact that his advisors suggested otherwise. Nonetheless, Niemöller still requested

\textsuperscript{50} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 36.  
permission to fight for his country after being imprisoned in 1937, a request that was denied.\(^{52}\) During his remaining eight years as a political prisoner of Dachau and Sachsenhausen, Niemöller would undergo a religious crisis. Although his status as Hitler’s personal prisoner saved him from the torture and physical labor of the camps, as well as granting him certain privileges such as writing and occasionally being allowed to visit family, Niemöller was ultimately kept in solitary confinement, left to dwell on the unspeakable horrors experienced by the prisoners around him.\(^{53}\) Niemöller emerged from the camps a changed man, and would go on to influence the Christian community, specifically on issues of guilt, political life, and militarism.

It may be easy to overlook the influence of the Karl Barth because he is not German, but Swiss. However, his influence really cannot be overstated, as he was not only a theology professor in the University of Bonn, but he also contributed to some of the most influential documents of the time, such as the Barmen Declaration in 1934, the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt in 1945, and the Darmstadt Statement in 1946. As a Calvinist, Barth often clashed with Lutheran pastors, especially over key theological issues in Lutheran theology like the Two Kingdoms; however, he also won allies in the more reform-minded Lutherans such as Hermann Diem and the aforementioned Martin Niemöller. Barth was an early opponent of the Nazis during the 1930s and was deported in 1935 when he refused to take a loyalty oath to Hitler.\(^{54}\)

These three men were important in a number of aspects for the Confessing Church. Firstly, all three of them opposed the Nazis in some way, and therefore would earn the Confessing Church’s approval from Allied forces in the post-war period.

\(^{52}\) Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 34.
\(^{53}\) Schreiber, Matthias. Pg. 81-93.
\(^{54}\) Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia.
Bonhoeffer in particular, would be a figure all Confessing Church members would point to in order to showcase the Church’s resistance to Nazism. However, they all were certainly not beyond reproach. In the case of both Niemöller and Bonhoeffer, they acted too late to limit the influence of Nazism, and all three leaders made comments that supported anti-Semitic philosophy.\textsuperscript{55} It was only later on after the events of Kristallnacht on November 8\textsuperscript{th} 1938 that other Protestant leaders would truly reevaluate some of the anti-Semitic values that had been so popular at the time.\textsuperscript{56} Niemöller’s request to rejoin the German navy also raised questions, and he particularly seemed to really grapple with a conflict between loyalty to state and his desire to do what he believed to be right.

Building on the issue of loyalty to state was the Lutheran theology of the Two Kingdoms. The idea was something Luther himself grappled with because of conflicting passages found within the Bible, and essentially revolves around the question of what a Christian’s role and responsibility to the state should be. Luther makes a distinction between two spheres. One is the Godly sphere, in which the righteousness of God reigns and which applies to all true Christians. The second is the temporal, in which state authority figures, which was considered especially important for non-Christians and the nominally Christian, and its purpose has been ordained by God to maintain order. Luther argues that true Christians do not need to brandish the sword of the temporal authority, because they are righteous through the Holy Spirit and don’t need the threat of secular


\textsuperscript{56} Also worth noting here is that no official response was made by the Church after the events of Kristallnacht.
law to keep them from spreading evil. However, both spheres must exist, as one spreads God’s word and benevolence; the other maintains order for those who would otherwise descend into chaos.\(^{57}\) Conversely, it is also equally important that a Christian does not interfere with the secular power, a stance Luther himself would take during the Peasants’ Rebellion of 1525. Luther specifically points to Romans 13 “Let every person be the subject to the governing authorities.”\(^{58}\) This doctrine was problematic for Church leaders of a number of levels. For one, it limited collaboration as well as resistance to the state. A strict interpretation of this doctrine would obviously create a dilemma for Lutherans attempting to reconcile this belief with their conflict with the Nazi state.

Essentially the common interpretation of this doctrine prevented active political resistance against state authority. If the Church was to be subservient to the state on all manners not pertaining to faith and theology, then it would essentially limit any outright disobedience to state law. In a way, however, it also prevented complete cooperation with the state. The Church was supposed to submit to state authority, but it also was not supposed to become a tool of the state lacking its own autonomy. This created an interesting dichotomy for Lutheran Church leaders. On one hand, they were not supposed to engage in any act of resistance, but on the other they were also supposed to maintain their own autonomy and preserve their position as spiritual authorities. Practically speaking, it meant that a majority of Church leaders would offer the occasional complaint over Nazi religious policy or the state’s interference in Church affairs, but never offered any real resistance. Whether they adhered to this principle over political motives or theological beliefs is impossible to distinguish, but the fact of the matter is that the


\(^{58}\) Socknoss, Brent. Pg. 14.
doctrine was consistently mentioned by prominent Church leaders. It also provided a means in which Church leaders could say they opposed the Nazis after the war, because they didn’t completely submit to Nazi rule. Church leaders labored in trying to find a balance between acquiescing to state commands, and speaking out against the state’s and German Christian’s attack on the Bible. This variance is evident through Martin Niemöller, as he was both imprisoned by the state for speaking out, yet was willing and even eager to serve in the military during a time of war.

Niemöller’s ambivalence can also be seen through his sermons. Even though other members of the Confessing considered him to be more outspoken and even radical, he never challenged the authority of the state in any of his sermons. Although, he often mentions the state is interfering with Church activity, he always falls short of advocating complete resistance. Instead he preaches to remain steadfast and trust in God. Niemöller’s criticism of the state was considered too radical by many members of the clergy; however, contained within his criticisms are reminders of loyalty to the nation. In a sermon given on November 8th, 1936, Niemöller challenges the state’s ideas of racial purity and reprimands the false teachings of the German Christians. However, he also states “We love our nation: we must love it—we cannot and dare not and must not do otherwise.” This retreat from complete chastisement represents the strength Luther’s doctrine held on even the most radical Lutheran clergy, and demonstrates the fierce loyalty the clergy felt toward the state. Even Niemöller’s most pointed sermon given on June 19th, 1937, in which he read aloud the names of seventy-two people who had been
imprisoned by the Nazis, does not call for definitive action against the state. While he calls for a reinstatement of civil rights and questions whether the people can believe Hitler, he never once says that action must be taken against the state. Instead he says that the Church must be allowed to speak, and the Gospel must be restored.63 Despite facing political prosecution, Niemöller still did not challenge the state’s authority nor does he call for any type of significant action to be taken against the government. His adherence to Luther’s Two Kingdoms essentially reduced his “resistance” to little more than an airing of grievances.

This submissiveness to the government can also been seen in the German Christian’s desire to redistrict the regional churches into a singular Reich Church. Many Protestant leaders also feared losing a connection with the state, as the bond between Church and state had weakened after the fall of the Second Empire. This relationship Protestant clergy felt toward the state cannot be overlooked when mentioning their protesting of Nazi involvement in their affairs. The Church never intended to directly challenge the state or its authority. Instead, Church leaders simply wished to make it known that they wished to keep their affairs apart from state involvement. Sentiments of nationalism and German pride ran deep in the clergy, and in no way did a majority of Protestants ever plan on overthrowing the state or even altering its course. The Confessing Church’s primary goal was to simply eliminate the influence of the German Christians, whom they believed to be twisting the message of Christ. They also believed that the removal of the German Christians would restore a working relationship with Nazi leadership, and therefore re-establish a congenial connection to the state.

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63 Niemöller, Martin. Pg. 269-283.
One must therefore keep in mind this goal of the Confessing Church when discussing its most famous document, the Barmen Declaration of 1934. Essentially the document makes numerous rejections of false prophets, and a failure to use the Word of God as the one and only true Christian authority. It states, “We reject the false doctrine that the church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamations, beyond and besides this one Word of God…and truths as God’s revelations.” This clearly can be seen as a rejection of the German Christian teachings, in which they would use other historical sources and writers to make their argument for an Aryan Jesus. The document also closes with an admonition of the state: “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 it, special leaders vested with ruling powers.”

This can be taken as a rejection of state leadership in the Church, as the “special leaders vested with ruling powers” most likely refers to Ludwig Müller and the German Christian-imposed leadership. This document represented a compromise between Lutherans and Barth and his reform-oriented supporters. However, it was also a divisive document, in that some Lutherans disagreed with parts of its theological message, and only agreed to the compromise because of the pressing concern of the German Christians, not because they agreed with its ideals. Historians often point to this document in order to show how divided the Confessing Church was on matters of theology.

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65 Historian Matthew Hockenos notes that many “conservative” leaders only signed Barmen to register a protest against the German Christians, not because they approved of its theological implications. At its core he notes, Barmen challenged four principles of Lutheran doctrine the law-gospel dialectic, the orders of creation and divine orders, natural revelation, and the Two Kingdoms. See Hockenos, pg 23.
66 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 23-27.
Overall, the Protestant Church’s role during the Third Reich is extremely complex, with clergy situated along a wide scale of perspectives. For the purposes of this chapter I have outlined the strongest view points, but the truth of the matter is that a more careful inspection of the time frame would show that one can place pastors and Church leaders into a wide variety of different positions on the issues discussed. Some Confessing Church leaders were willing to work with the more moderate German Christians in an attempt to bridge the gap between the two, while others like Bonhoeffer recognized the threat the “people’s church” could have on Christianity. Still a vast majority remained “neutral” and did not support either side, preferring to stay out of conflict entirely. These members of Church leadership would essentially fall into the category of most Germans. They would offer no serious contradiction to National Socialism, and although they may not have accepted the ideas of the German Christians entirely, they most likely sympathized with some of their ideas. Essentially, this “neutral” was only “neutral” in that they stayed out of the “Kirchenkampf,” not that they were in any way bystanders in the rise of Nazism. Furthermore, it must be said that the overall influence of the Church slowly dissipated starting in 1933, and by the outbreak of war in 1939, the Church was essentially a non-factor in the resistance. “Neutral” pastors most likely dealt with a number of more banal concerns, as a large amount of people left the Church entirely, magnetically drawn to the charisma that surrounded the Nazi movement. In just two short years, an estimated one million people left the Church from 1937 to 1939.67

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Although the German Christian movement collapsed along with the Third Reich, its members and beliefs did not simply crumble away with it. Although most of its pastors were initially removed from positions of power, “Most members desired and achieved full reintegration into the German Protestant community.”68 Although many Germany Christians would backtrack on their anti-Jewish sentiments, they often rationalized and marginalized their actions during the Third Reich. Confessing Church leaders who assumed control of the Church in 1945, would use the presence of the German Christians to limit the role of denazification within the Church. By using the German Christians as scapegoats they did not have to examine the party affiliation of its members. Leaders like Niemöller and Diem would attempt to truly undergo a process of self reflection, but a majority of German Protestants were not willing to do the same. The period of 1933-1945 would leave the Protestant Church in shambles, and placed in between managing the wants of its parishioners and mediating with Allied powers.

68 Bergen, Doris. Pg. 207.
In 1945, the German Protestant Church was faced with a staggering challenge. With the end of the war came the liberation of Nazi concentration camps and an internal collapse of the Nazi government. With the fall of the Nazi state, so too came the fall of the German Christians, and essentially the fall of any structure the Church had in place. The Confessing Church was in ruins, as a majority of its members had either been forced into silence, fled, been imprisoned, or worse.\(^{69}\) When its members were finally able to begin to reorganize, questions were abundant and challenging. However, Confessing Church members did have a few factors working in their favor. The resistance record of some of its members (above all the now deceased Dietrich Bonhoeffer), and lobbying by members such as Theophil Wurm and Martin Niemöller, granted the Church certain privileges from the Allied command of the postwar divided Germany.\(^{70}\) This included being allowed to re-form their services, reorganize the Church, and assist in providing for the masses of starving, homeless, and fearful German people. The Allies were in need of organizations to help handle the massive task of managing a country with no central government, and therefore welcomed the assistance of groups like the Confessing Church.\(^{71}\) However, with these privileges came many questions. How was the Church to reorganize? Should it simply re-form itself to the previous regional districts, tied loosely to the state? Was Germany’s destruction a sign from God? Should Germany create a Free Church separated from the state similar to America? Should Protestants form an entirely

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\(^{71}\) This was primarily because the Church presented evidence of their resistance to Hitler. Members like Niemöller who had been imprisoned, and Bonhoeffer who had been killed, provided enough evidence to receive Allied support.
new system? And above all, how should Protestants conduct themselves in relationship to the state? Did Luther’s Two Kingdoms still apply in spite of the passivity of the Church’s resistance? To what degree does the Church assert itself in the political sphere? In addition to these questions came a number of other concerns, namely what to do with the remaining German Christians that still tentatively held power. All of these questions had to be answered and answered quickly, as the practical concerns of refugees and the demands of Allied control required immediate action.

For Church leadership, swiftly creating a workable infrastructure was vital. Forced to linger in obscurity for the final years of the war, the leading members of the Confessing Church were eager to seize power back from the German Christians. Aided by Allied forces, leading members of the Confessing Church rapidly formed a council in July of 1945, in the town of Treysa. Because of their stance as part of the resistance, the Confessing Church would make up the senior leadership of the new Church. The orchestrator of this meeting was Theophil Wurm, a staunch Lutheran who held the post of senior pastor at the age of 77. Set before the Church leaders was the task of organizing new leadership and a system of organization for the various municipalities. However, at the onset of the meeting it became clear very quickly that the bickering and infighting that had plagued the Confessing Church during the war would continue. Hans Meiser, a senior Lutheran pastor from Prussia, argued that the time had come to return to the Old Prussian Union that had existed during the Second German Empire (1871-1918). Meiser believed that the organizational system set up during the Weimar Republic weakened the Church’s authority and influence. Therefore, returning to this previous system would prevent a future takeover by the state because the Church would be able to influence state activities more readily. This older system would unite the Reformed

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72 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 44.
and Lutheran Churches under one banner, and actually bind the Church even closer to the state then it had been before 1933. It would also minimize the power of the Union Churches in Northern Germany, and restore power to traditional Lutherans, which consequently limited the influence of pastors who Meiser believed had strayed too near Calvinist theology.\footnote{Hockenos, Matthew. Pg 44.}

Essentially, this system would severely limit the power of Karl Barth and his supporters, and most likely reaffirm the traditional interpretation of Lutheran doctrine, namely the Two Kingdoms.

Wurm himself argued for the pre-Nazi Church, which would maintain the regional districts in a semi-democratic system, which included both elected and appointed posts. Instead of a structural change, Wurm wanted to change the Church’s outreach goals. He wanted to “re-Christianize Germany” from the top down, which would involve upper Church management dictating policy to the regional districts.\footnote{Hockenos, Matthew. Pg 44.} Other members, like the recently released Martin Niemöller, advocated a more reformed model that emphasized communal responsibility in a democratic format. The final system was a compromise between these two groups. They decided that a twelve-member council would govern under the name EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland), headed by Bishop Wurm.\footnote{Something interesting to note was the emphasis on EKD coming first in the name, as opposed to the previous moniker DEK. Church leaders emphasized this switch because it placed Evangelisch before Deutsche, to show a separation from the German Christian movement.}\footnote{See Chapter 1, Barmen was the declaration in which members of the Confessing Church voiced their grievances against the German Christians in 1934. It also slightly lessened the interpretation of Luther’s Two Kingdoms. For members like Barth and Niemöller, it set a theological precedent they wished to follow, others like Wurm and Meiser wanted to retract from the implications of the statement.} Under the council would be the Synod of the EKD, which was composed of one hundred elected members and twenty appointed members from five districts. The Synod would be responsible for passing Church legislation. Niemöller however, canvassed furiously to maintain the Council of Brethren (Reichsbunderrat), which was the elected council that had been set up during Barmen.\footnote{This}
council continued to provide an alternate voice from the EKD after 1945. The newly formed EKD would also release a declaration entitled *Message to the Congregations*, which served to solidify the EKD’s authority.

When discussing the Church’s policies and lack of response to the events of the Holocaust, it is easy to overlook the insurmountable logistical task it was presented with. One must keep in mind that the internal structure of the Church was no more, and the only semblance of leadership that was held in high esteem by Allied Forces was essentially the leading figures of the Barmen Declaration. These Church leaders often did not see eye to eye in terms of politics and theology, so determining a single course of action was difficult. The Church leaders were also undoubtedly pressed for time, because of the desperate situation many Germans were in. In early 1945, before the end of the war, Hitler’s private secretary Martin Bormann had issued an order to destroy the country’s economic infrastructure, so as to prevent a seizure of supplies by Germany’s enemies. This, in combination with Germany’s inevitable defeat, led to boundless panic and the destruction of basic supplies. “…Water, power plants, and energy service began to give out. The distribution of transport rendered food supplies scarce, especially in cities, with long lines forming and panic buying leading to widespread waste of what little remained…Finding regular work became futile…” The end of the war brought a return of millions of soldiers, including prisoners of war. An estimated three million captured German prisoners were released by Allied forces during the final few months of the war. Further problems included housing, as an Allied bombing campaign never

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77 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 7, 8, 21, 22, 43-45.
78 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 7.
80 Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 27.
before witnessed by History had caused wanton destruction. In some cities, over 80% of the buildings were destroyed.\(^{81}\) This obviously caused massive homelessness, and in combination with the millions of refugees, former prisoners of war, returning soldiers, etc…finding places for people to live was a top priority.

Further compounding German’s anxiety were the actions of Russia and some of the Nazi-defeated Eastern European Nations. One action was specifically vivid in the minds of Berliners, where an estimated 130,000 women and girls were raped by the victorious Red Army.\(^{82}\) In Poland and Germany’s other Eastern neighbors, oppressed citizens lashed out against Germans who had recently immigrated there during the Nazi promotion of the “Lebensraum” (living space) policy, which encouraged Germans to move to the annexed regions of the new Reich.\(^{83}\) In June 1945 thousands of Germans were amassed and mercilessly driven out of Poland, which only served to increase the number of homeless and starving refugees.\(^{84}\) Others were far less fortunate. Historian Andreas Hillgruber estimates up to two million refugees, fleeing civilians, and released prisoners of war died in the summer of 1945, during the redistribution of land in Poland, the newly restored Czechoslovakia, East Prussia, and the Southern Territories, or fleeing the advancing Red Army.\(^{85}\) Furthering German despondence was the unpopular Allied policy of denazification, part of which was an attempt to root the Nazis out of political power. The procedure required all Germans to fill out a questionnaire, which would be

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\(^{84}\) Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 33.
\(^{85}\) Hillgruber, Andreas. *Zweierlei Untergang*. Berlin: Corso bei Siedler, 1986. Pg. 41. Admittedly, this statistic has been contested, but even the more conservative estimates placed the death toll at 500,000. See Bessel, Richard. Pg. 69.
used to determine their involvement in the Nazi party, and if necessary limit them from positions of influence. Although most of the more “nominal members” of the party were pardoned, the process still was embarrassing and fostered misgivings toward the Allied forces, especially in conjunction with the trials at Nuremberg. \(^{86}\) All of these factors in combination with destroyed cities and yet another defeat in war, led most Germans to feel as though they were the victims. \(^{87}\)

For the Church, denazification was both unpopular and problematic. A large number of pastors and leading bishops had had some form of involvement with the Nazi party. The number of pastors involved in Nazi activity was considerable, as 226 out of 645 pastors in Hesse, 143 of 341 in Baden and 51 of 55 in Bremen were incriminated during trials in March 1946. \(^{88}\) Ultimately, however, Allied Command granted the Protestant Church special privileges, in that it was able to conduct its own process of denazification. \(^{89}\) Most of the incriminated pastors were often members of the fallen German Christian Movement. The Church’s self-denazification was in reality more like a de-German-Christianization. Protestant leaders quickly pointed to the German Christian movement as the primary offenders of Nazism (even if a majority of German Christian pastors did not join the Nazi party), and as such used them as a scapegoat to circumvent a true denazification. \(^{90}\) Some leaders and members of the German Christian movement pointed out the hypocrisy in this practice. “Pastor Friedrich Buschtöns protested that the regulation to cleanse the church in Westphalia and the Rhineland aimed not at denazification but at the removal of German

\(^{86}\) Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 47-49.
\(^{87}\) A topic I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 4, in context with guilt.
\(^{88}\) Ziemann, Benjamin. Pg. 10.
\(^{89}\) Bergen, Doris. Pg. 207-210.
\(^{90}\) Bergen, Doris. 208.
Christians. ‘Why does ‘regulation’ not mention party membership?,’ he wanted to know.”

Although it probably would have been impossible for members of the Church to truly cleanse them selves of National Socialism, this sort of tactic would be typical of how a large portion of the Church would respond to the Holocaust. Only a nominal, glossed-over inspection of Nazism took place in a majority of Protestant districts, perhaps because of fear to admit ties to the Nazi party (its likely Church leaders feared Allied retribution and/or being tried at Nuremberg), or due to resentment at taking part in the exercise to begin with, or simply because clergy was unable to face the truth: that both Protestants in general and Church leadership had by and large participated in, and welcomed National Socialism. Overall, the process seemed to be little more than a political tactic, helping to solidify the power of the EKD and appease the Allies, since within a few years a majority of German Christians had reintegrated back into the Protestant Church.

The effects of denazification in conjunction with the revelation of the atrocities in the concentration camps left the EKD in a tenuous position. They were extremely concerned with welcoming back members who had left the Church during the war, and therefore treaded carefully in their public statements. They were afraid that if they took a stance that seemed to favor the Allies too much, they risked people abandoning the Church entirely. Above all, a

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92 For the Church to actually cleanse itself of National Socialism, the process would have had to have been extraordinary. Even if the Church managed to removed every pastor who had supported National Socialism, which in and of itself would have been extremely difficult, Nazi ideologies still had a firm hold on much of the clergy. In 1945 anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish thought was still bountiful, and even members like Karl Barth, who was one of the most vocal opponents of Nazism, still had a propensity for some extremely anti-Semitic thought. Actually cleansing the Church of all Nazi ideology would probably have had to include bringing in foreign pastors and rebuilding the Church in its entirety. See Karl Barth, The Jewish Problem and the Christian Answer. Discussed in chapter IV.
93 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 47. In reference to Clergy’s fears.
94 Bergen, Doris. Pg. 228. Denazification as a whole was both successful and a failure. In general, it was impossible to remove every person who had affiliation with the Nazi party, and most members were able to reintegrate in society. However, the process did remove the credibility of the Nazi party in the minds of the German people, and essentially eliminated its existence as a legitimate political party. See Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 54-55.
majority of Church leaders felt that a growing trend of secularization\textsuperscript{95} and an abandonment
of Christian principles in all of Europe had led to the events of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{96} Therefore, it
was extremely important to increase Church membership, especially since so many people
had abandoned the Protestant Church during the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{97} The more reform-minded
leaders were still angry at the way Hitler had interfered in their policies, and were wary of the
state becoming too powerful. Therefore, management had two primary goals. The first was,
as Bishop Wurm had argued during Treysa, to re-Christianize Germany, which was an
attempt to reestablish the values of Christianity throughout Europe. Church leaders widely
accredited an increase in secular thinking to the rise of National Socialism, and the
subsequent genocide. Re-Christianizing Germany, they believed, would ensure morality
would return to the German people. Therefore, Church leaders prioritized reinstituting
Christian education into schools. They were also focused on welcoming in as many people
back under the Church umbrella as possible. Evidence of this can be seen in the document
published by the Brethren Council in August, 1945 entitled \textit{The Message to the
Congregations}.

\textit{The Message to the Congregations}, often referred to simply as the Treysa agreement,
was above all a compromise by the various factions of Church leaders in order to focus on
the future. Contained within the document are three important points. First is an admission of
both shock and guilt for the atrocities that were committed by the German people.\textsuperscript{98} Although
the document admits the Church “fell short of Barmen,” its primary purpose was not to
address the topic of guilt but to encourage the building of a new community based on
fellowship through Christ. Therefore, only a small paragraph is devoted to remorse, and

\textsuperscript{95} Which they traced back to the French Revolution.
\textsuperscript{96} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 47-50, 57.
\textsuperscript{97} See Chapter I.
\textsuperscript{98} See Chapter IV.
interspersed within this paragraph are emotions of disbelief and a feeling of being victimized. The second is an encouragement to put aside topics of theological debate, such as Confession and Communion. This section in particular emphasizes the need for congregations and pastors to put aside theological arguments and work together for the future. Lastly, the document encourages the formation of congregations and communities based on fellowship in Christ, not the pride of man (secular themes).  

The Church leaders certainly achieved their first goal in the second portion of the Message to the Congregations. This section is incontestably a section of compromise among Church leaders on matters of theology. The division between the Confession Church’s leaders is well documented by historian Matthew Hockenos. However, they were able, at least for a brief moment, to put aside their differences in the face of great tragedy. Evidence of this can be seen through statements like “We classify ourselves by our confession…We have no right to say the differences between the confessions are irrelevant. However, at the same time we feel that God is at work bringing Christians of different confessions closer together than ever before.” The area of confession was a primary point of debate between the various sects of Christianity, particular in Protestantism. In fact, one of the arguments Martin Luther presented against the Catholic Church was about the need for a mediator (a priest) during confession. That is what solidifies this document as a tool of agglomeration. The need to put aside the topic of confession proves the desire to put aside old differences and begin anew, not just with Protestants but with Catholics as well. The need for a return to Christian morality supersedes the theological differences Christians separate themselves with,

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100 Message to the Congregations.

statement framers wrote. This brings us to the second goal Church leaders set about to achieve.

This second goal was to develop a new political awareness that would prevent the kind of state interference that had so handily limited the Church’s presence in political affairs. This is clearly visible in the third part of the Message to the Congregations: “We cannot change the World. But when the influence of Christendom on public life ceases, the link binding freedom and justice is severed.”102 Church leaders believed that the rise of secularization and the abandonment of Christian morals and teachings had led to the rise of National Socialism. Therefore, the best way to prevent this from ever happening again was to ensure a Christian presence in community, education, and government. The reformist section of the Church, namely Karl Barth and Martin Niemöller, consistently pushed this idea. For Lutherans, this would involve rethinking Luther’s Two Kingdoms doctrine. Even though a majority of Protestant leadership asserted they had resisted the Nazis,103 members seemed to sense the need for reform, or at least clarification, in matters of political consequence. The Message to the Congregations suggests as much: “We must ask ourselves: to what degree does the church bear responsibility for the whole of public life—state, society, and culture—and how far in fact it has carried out this responsibility. This question must be answered by the church for its members in light of our new knowledge and new spirit of obedience to Christ.”104 The questioning of the Church’s life in “state, society, and culture” was a key factor for Church leaders in the years immediately following 1945. Changing the Church’s involvement in political affairs was something that could be done relatively easily, especially in comparison to some of the other tasks facing the Church (such as what to do about anti-

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102 Message to the Congregations.
103 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 50-53.
104 Message to the Congregations.
Semitism). Evidence of this can be seen through the writings of Church leaders and the involvement of Protestants in political activism.

A transition into political involvement raised a multitude of inquiries. How exactly was the Church to become involved in political affairs? Should it provide support to political platforms that shared similar values? Should the Church form its own political party? Should Church leaders directly comment on daily political issues or maintain a distance from more trivial manners and only speak out only on manners of great importance? What would the Church’s role be in international affairs? And perhaps most importantly, what should the Church do if a government were to enter into an area of questionable moral conduct? Did Luther’s doctrine still apply or was the Church free to oppose government action with more than just words? Naturally, Church leaders’ viewpoints differed on all of these questions. However, leadership quickly agreed on two points. The presence of Christianity was needed in political and international affairs, as well as in the basic education of the nation. Most pastors believed this alone would prevent another war, as the presence of Christian morality would prevent the rise of the radical immoral secular thought they traced back to the French Revolution and determined to be the root cause of the rise of National Socialism. However more reform-minded leaders thought this did not go far enough. They vowed the Church would no longer remain silent about government actions it considered questionable or wrong. Martin Niemöller in particular was instrumental in changing abiding views of the Church’s involvement in political and social affairs.

For Niemöller, the primary reason the Protestant Church did not prevent the Holocaust was because of a lack of political and social activism. Niemöller firmly believed

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that the most catastrophic failure of the Church was its failure to speak out definitively against the Nazis. He said:

We are most certainly not without guilt; and I ask myself over and over again what would have happened if 14,000 evangelical ministers and communities had defended the truth with their very lives in the year 1933 and 1934, when there must have been a possibility? If we had said that it is not for Herman Goering simply to throw 100,000 communists into concentration camps to perish? I can image that 30 to 40 thousand Christians would have been shortened by a head, but I can also imagine that we would have thus saved 30-40 millions of lives…\textsuperscript{106}

For Niemöller, nothing was more important then this premise. It was why he would become such a driving force in admitting the Church’s guilt,\textsuperscript{107} and why he pushed so hard for political reform. However, Niemöller’s ideas for how this should be accomplished seemed to conflict with Bishop Wurm’s idea of ‘re-Christianizing” Germany from the top down. Niemöller’s solution was a more democratic and community-based ministry. As he put it “…the divine word in the Church must be spoken by the community and not by a single man.”\textsuperscript{108} Niemöller was concerned with one man or group ever gaining too much power, even in the Church. During the Confessing Church’s meeting at Treysa, he had protested against Otto Dibelius and Theophil Wurm assuming the title of bishop,\textsuperscript{109} indicating his distaste of individuals who assumed, in his view, an abundance of political power. This idea

\textsuperscript{106} Niemöller, Martin. \textit{Of Guilt and Hope}. New York: Philosophical library. Pg. 16.
\textsuperscript{107} A topic discussed in chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{108} Niemöller, Martin. \textit{Of guilt and hope}. (a letter). Pg. 49.
\textsuperscript{109} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 46.
of a community-based Church seems to have been influenced by some of Luther’s ideas, and suggests in isolation Niemöller consulted some of Luther’s writings for guidance.\footnote{This is just my speculation since Niemöller seems to return to some of Luther’s ideas about a priest reflecting the will of its community as opposed to vise versa. He also cites Luther in some of his interviews and writings. See of guilt and hope pg. 16, 47-52.}

Niemöller, as well as other Church leaders, would ensure that the Church would be active in political events. When asked by an American Army chaplain in an interview if the influence of the Church would be different in post-war Germany, Niemöller responded:

Yes, the Church has now learned that she has a responsibility in public life, a responsibility she did not recognize before. It is because of this blindness—among other things—that the Church did not speak out as loudly and as clearly as she should have. For the Church saw well enough where Hitler was leading the German people, but she kept quiet, because she believed she should not get mixed in politics, which was certainly an error, and even a catastrophic error. I think this will not happen again.\footnote{Niemöller, Martin. \textit{Of Guilt and Hope}. Interview with an American Army Chaplain.}

This would be the defining tone for Niemöller, during his attempts to reconstruct the political attitudes of the Protestant Church. In the years to come, Protestants would campaign vehemently against nuclear arms and militarization (in conjunction with other groups), as well as seek to limit the power of the state, and ensure Christian education.\footnote{Cooper, Alice Holmes. \textit{Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements since 1945}. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1996 Pg. 45-50.}

There most successful endeavor was undoubtedly the insurance that Christian education would become part of the “ordinary curriculum in state and municipal schools…”\footnote{Weizsäcker, Richard von. In a letter concerning the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany. \url{http://www.constitution.org/cons/germany.txt}. Accessed. March 20th, 2010.}
insurance of Christian education into West Germany’s constitution, called the
“Grundgesetz” (Basic Law), was a great victory for Church leaders. However, this new
found political awareness would come with a new set of questions. Namely, how was the
Church to conduct itself in the political arena?

Karl Barth wrote a series of essays and letters, (from Switzerland where he
remained after the war), that sought to define a Christian’s rightful place in the public
sphere.\textsuperscript{114} He had slightly different reasoning than Niemöller in his argument for the
Church’s presence in the political arena. Although their goal was essentially the same,
Barth’s argument that the Church must be present in politics was slightly more reserved
than Niemöller’s reasoning. In \textit{The Christian Community in the Midst of Political
Change}, Barth argues that political systems are necessary instruments given from God,
and the Church cannot abandon its responsibility to take part in the matter of governing.
He writes “Political systems may be as uneclesiastical as they like, but the Church
cannot on any account be unpolitical, and that applies to all its members to.”\textsuperscript{115} This
message is similar to Niemöller’s, however Barth is also making note of the specifics of
dealing with governments and nations. When he mentions that political systems do not
have to focus on or answer to any religion, he is essentially saying then, that it is the
Church’s responsibility to ensure that a government has some form of moral conscience
in which it must contend with. As Barth puts it, “The concrete form in which the
Christian gratitude for God’s gift and ordinance is expressed is its sharing of political
responsibility. The Church cannot simply leave this work to others.”\textsuperscript{116} This was

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{114}{Barth had fled Germany in 1935, and remained in his native Switzerland after the war. See Chapter 1.}
\footnotetext{115}{Barth, Karl. \textit{Against the Stream, shorter post war writings 1946-1952}. London and South Hampton:
Camelot Press, 1954. Pg. 81.}
\footnotetext{116}{Barth, Karl. Pg 81.}
\end{footnotes}
essentially the command requested by Church leaders to their congregations: Be the moral compass for your government. Without a Christian presence they argued, a secular government ran the risk of falling victim to man’s inner nature: namely corruption, violence, and deception. But how exactly was a willing Christian to do this? Barth had the answer to this question in his essay *Political Decisions in the Unity of Faith*.

*Political Decisions in the Unity of Faith* is essentially Barth’s how-to-guide for a Christian looking to accept his responsibility in the political arena. He states “He (the Christian man) will try to ‘assess’ the respective weight and value of the arguments. But—and this is where he will differ from his fellow-citizens—he will do so not in a space apart from his Christian faith, but before God…” Now, one might ask what that means exactly. To clarify, Barth uses the example of the political argument of German remilitarization (1949). He mentions that a Christian must consider both sides of an argument, since understanding the entire situation is vital to rendering a fair and honest judgment. Then he must consult scripture and Christ through prayer, and make a decision. It is vital that Christians make a decision based on Godly principles, not political ones, and share that view publicly with other Christians. Barth says that this may create rifts in the Church. He specifically points out how Niemöller had become somewhat of a pariah because he was campaigning vigorously to prevent German rearmament, but states that oftentimes (as with Niemöller’s case), one side will make a more persuasive spiritual argument. Ultimately however, each Christian must decide for himself, based on matters of the soul, not on political arguments.

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117 Use of he/his is in Barth’s original language, as opposed to the more gender neutral terms used today.  
118 Barth, Karl. Pg 152.  
119 To clarify more distinctly, I mean the debate
Barth’s more nuanced answers to specific questions in the previously mentioned *The Christian Community in the Midst of Political Change* triggered responses from a number of other pastors. A particularly interesting answer (the like of which would draw the ire of Lutherans), is worth noting. When asked “Has the State the right to force its citizens to join a definite party?” Barth replied “Here I can only answer with a frank ‘No!’ In making this demand the State would not be a proper State at all. One can join a party only if one is convinced that it stands for that right.”¹²⁰ This statement seemed to fly in the face of the orthodox interpretation of Luther’s Two Kingdoms, because it would imply directly defying the state. However, many Church leaders held a somewhat ambiguous stance toward the reformist message of political responsibility. On one hand, they argued for a renewed awareness in political affairs and encouraged maintaining Christian messages in education and law; however, they also detracted from the more outright defiance of reformists like Barth and Niemöller. They also balked at the notion of Christian political parties (an idea Barth also did not believe in), and Christian politicians. The strong stance of these reformists threatened their theological understanding of Luther, and even caused Lutherans like Hans Asmussen to ask “Does Luther belong before the Nuremberg court?”¹²¹ Even though the EKD bickered over how a Christian should behave in a public sphere, they seemed united in the fact that a Christian presence must be there.

Evidence of Lutheran pastors supporting the Christian presence in politics can be seen through their personal letters and publications (aside from the *Message to the Congregations*). However, before delving into these mediums, I should clarify what I

¹²⁰ Barth, Karl. *Against the Stream.* Pg 100.
¹²¹ Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 60
mean by support. Most Lutheran clergymen were concerned with two important factors. One, they wanted to be sure that the state would not gain too much power, so it would not try to infringe on the Church’s right to administer its own affairs. This was clearly in response to the Nazi policies, which had limited Church power and restricted their ability to preach unabated. They also however, sought to ensure Allied forces that they were not interested in become a political body or interfere with Allied control, so long as they were free to voice their opinion when it suited them and spread the Gospel unimpeded. This difference almost always led back to their interpretation of Luther’s Two Kingdoms.

However, Lutheran goals were in fact similar to reformers, in that they wanted to limit the state’s political power. The primary difference between the two groups was the level of their involvement in political affairs, and their willingness to confront the state on issues unrelated to Church policies.

With that understood, we can move on to some of the writings of Lutheran Church leaders. One prime example of illustration of their goals can be seen through a letter to an Allied commander from Bishop Otto Dibelius and others. They state emphatically that “After Protestant apprenticeship, the single Christian is, and thereby also the Church in its entirety, obligated to perform the orders of the state obediently, provided they are not against God’s commandment.”

This kind of statement was typical of Lutheran Church leaders, who were concerned with ensuring that the Church was not going to get too intertwined in political affairs, yet also maintaining a condition in which they could and would refuse state commands. The same letter maintains that obedience to the state can only continue as long as the Church and state form a body in

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which the Church can preach responsibly. It was in this way that a majority Church leaders attempted to limit the power the state had over them. As long as the Church was free to preach without reprieve, and it did not command Christians to go against God’s laws, then they would remain obedient to the state. Unfortunately, this was exactly the kind of thinking that got the Church into such a predicament during the Nazi period, and on some level, whether they wanted to admit it or not, Dibelius and others understood this.

Dibelius’s writings show the difficulty he had with reconciling his steadfast faith in Luther’s theological foundations with the aftermath of the war. He often wavered between taking action against the state and ensuring Allied command that the Church had no desire to take part in political affairs. It was in this way that a majority of the clergy differed from reformers. Reformers wanted to influence the state to consistently make moral choices, or at least force them to factor in the Church’s view. However, most pastors still took a more literal interpretation of Luther. They believed they had no place in the political arena. Indeed, they believed not only that they didn’t belong in politics, but they were actually commanded not to speak out against the state so long as the state did not prevent the spread of the Gospel or command its citizens to do something against the commandments. If all Christians had done this in 1933, they reasoned, Hitler would have not been able to do what he did. Outside of those conditions, most pastors wanted no part in state affairs; in fact they fought against it.

Otto Dibelius argued that the Church was not to become a tool for political manipulation, and feared that if the Church delved into politics wholeheartedly, then it
would be pulled into things that were neither their concern nor their purpose. In conjunction with other pastors, he wrote that “The Protestant Church does not form any political party and it doesn’t recommend any party. We wish that all parties will work together with appropriate Christian personalities…” As previously quoted above, he wrote to Allied command, stating that the Church did not endorse any particular political party. However, Dibelius is also quoted in journals like Der Kurier in 1947, where he sought to increase the Church’s influence on the media. He argued that this was important because it could curtail the power of a nationally controlled media. This is most likely because Dibelius, like other pastors, blamed the secularization of the state for the lapse in morality during the Third Reich. In a speech in 1945 Dibelius said, “The state--that is the animal from the abyss, which is forcing people to wear his mark on their forehead, which fights against the saints and blasphemes God with bold lips…” This speech seems to directly conflict with his comments about the Church remaining out of the political arena. The direct condemnation of the negative influence of the state would make one think that Dibelius supported reformers. However, in conjunction with his statement above, it leaves one wondering where he stands. How can Dibelius both call the state an instrument of the Devil, and yet maintain that the Church would obey its commands so long as they are not against God’s commandments? Overall, I would say that Dibelius’s conflict represents a greater battle that took place within a majority of Lutherans. The blame of secularization for the Holocaust, a view held by a majority of

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125 EZAB Bestand 2/275 Die Kirche gegen die Allmacht des Staates.

126 Dibelius, Otto. Reden--Briefe. Zürich: Staefa AG, 1970. pg. 37. Der Staat- das ist das Tier aus dem abgrund, das die Menschen zwingt, sein Zeichen an der Stirn zu tragen, das wider die Heiligen streitet das Gott mit frechem Munde läster…
Church leaders, makes one wonder how Church leaders could ever want to remain out of political affairs after seeing their effect. Ultimately, the efforts of reformers and outside factors prevented the vacillating of senior leaders from reverting to old habits.

The events of 1945 had changed the dynamic of German politics too much for this to take place. Even if reformers like Niemöller and Barth had not argued so vehemently and taken such an active role in politics, the events of the time would have drawn the Church into the political arena, whether the leadership wanted to be there or not. Three important outside factors ensured that this would take place. The first, and probably most influential, was Allied command. Church leaders needed to interact on a political level with Allied forces to accomplish the daily task of finding building materials for their churches, receiving permission to organize and preach, and acquire supplies and distribute supplies for the needy German people. The division of Germany into four sections made this interaction all the more international. Church leaders had to deal with Americans, British, French, and Russians on a daily basis, plus any other members of neighboring countries like Poland or Austria who may have been displaced by the war. This prevented them from simply submitting to a central government. The division of political power in Germany meant Church leaders had to answer to several “governing” bodies, bodies that they did not always hold in the highest esteem.\(^{127}\) If a solidified central government had existed in 1945, Church leaders could have shrunk into the background of political life and follow state commands. As it was, even with the formation of FGR and GDR in 1949, Church leaders were still stuck between two governments.

\(^{127}\) See chapter 4 over disputes between collective guilt.
Second was the worldwide attention on Germany. The entire world had been shocked by the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust, so therefore a microscope was placed on German policy and government. The World Council of Churches took an instant interest in rehabilitating the Church in Germany, and indeed many key Protestant leaders sought their support for credibility and material needs.\footnote{See chapter 4, motivations for the \textit{Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt}} This interest and attention drew Church leaders into matters of politics, as they needed to promote an image that would ensure them respect from the outside world. They were keenly aware of this, which is why they appointed Martin Niemöller as the EKD’s foreign ambassador.\footnote{Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 49.} This position was created to reconstruct a working relationship with the Churches of Europe, and more specifically to counter the barrage of phone calls, radio broadcasts, and letters from foreign leaders, who were concerned with the Church’s conduct over the past decade.\footnote{Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 49.} Niemöller was chosen specifically because of his candid admissions of guilt and his record of imprisonment during the war.\footnote{Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 49, 100.}

The third event would be the Cold War and Germany’s unique place as a hotbed for Cold War activity, particularly in Berlin. Situated between the Americans in the West and Russians in the East, all Germans were dragged into the conflict of ideology because of Germany’s prime location and divided status. The political division of Germany into four zones, the lack of a powerful central government, and a lack of a clear direction for the future all exacerbated this situation. Propaganda from both sides was thrown at German citizens, and the solidification of two separate German nations only ensured that Church leaders were faced with an issue they had never before experienced.
The idea that the Church should or even could return back into its pre-1933 state was outrageous to Church leaders. Even if they didn’t feel particularly guilty or responsible for the rise of the Third Reich, all Church leaders wished to change some form of Church policy to ensure that the circumstances created at the end of WWI and the ensuing consequences never happened again. For many leaders that meant having a louder voice in state affairs and promoting the spread of the Gospel and Christian education. For many Lutherans, this obviously conflicted with their interpretations of portions of Luther’s doctrine, particularly the Two Kingdoms. This conflict can be seen through the contradictions in their writings and speeches about political action and responsibility. Otto Dibelius is a prime example of this conflict. His writings about the state are paradoxical and contradictory. He assures the Church’s loyalty to the state, yet attempts to limit their influence on media, and blames the state’s secular nature for the destruction of his homeland. This inner strife represents the struggle Luther Church leaders had with reevaluating their interpretations of Luther.

Over time, the more active Church leaders like Niemöller gained a lot of support within Protestant circles, and would ensure a future in the political sphere for the Church. The theological compromise made at Treysa was made solely for the purpose of uniting on a front of political awareness and Christian education. *The Message to the Congregations* demonstrates as much, as both conservation and reformist leaders bring up questions of state responsibility and activism. The state of the German nation in 1945 served as a daily reminder for Church leaders that they must never again allow such a catastrophe to occur. For pastors Niemöller and Barth, this meant raising awareness and involvement in every major aspect of political affairs. For those who favored a stricter
interpretation of Luther this posed a problem, as they sought to reconcile their beliefs with their realization that change was needed. For German Protestant leaders, the future must be one in which the Church would serve as a guiding light against the forces of secularism and passivity. Outside forces would insure this all the more, as members from dozens of different countries, and the eyes of the world would focus on the reconstruction of Europe.
Chapter III: The Protestant Church and the “East”

The evolution of a new political presence for German Protestants after 1945 also came with new challenges on the scale of global politics. The rising tension of the Cold War over ideological methodology was felt acutely around the entire world, especially in war-torn and divided Germany. Church leaders grappled with pressure from the political community to join the “Western” view, which coincided with the sentiment of Protestant anti-communism traditionally held by prominent Church leaders and broader Church circles. To a large extent this pressure was effective, since the Church had opposed communism during the Weimar and Third Reich due to its emphasis on atheism. In addition, many Church leaders worked more closely with Americans forces during the reconstruction process, and therefore often held a certain affection for “Der amerikanische Glaube” (The American belief). These factors, combined with Germans’ initial apprehension and past conflicts with the Russians (considering the

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132 As I discussed in the introduction, because of the language used by Church leaders, I found it necessary to employ a similar use of terms namely “West” in reference to America and capitalism and “East” for the Soviet Union and communism. Church leader’s use of this type of rhetoric was often meant to summon up the typical stereotypes and prejudices we are familiar with today. Essentially, the use of the “West” was often used to beckon images of a “heartless capitalist bourgeoisie”, just as the use of “East” was often intended to bring forth images of the “atheist proletariat.” That is not to say I in any way condone such generalizations, but rather I choose to use the language to help expose the generalized ways in which Church leaders viewed each ideology. From this point on I will cease to use “West” and “East” in quotations only for aesthetic purposes.

133 Again, it is necessary to clarify that I do not mean that all Protestant clergy opposed communism. Indeed, a fair number of pastors were in fact members of either the socialist or communist parties. See, Goecikel, Robert. The Lutheran Church and the East German State: Political conflict and change under Ulbricht and Honecker. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.Pg. 40-41. However, amongst senior Church leaders, communism was generally seen as an enemy of Christianity for its atheistic nature. See Hockenos, Matthew D. A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Pg. 16-18.

nature of war fought in the East), caused many Church leaders to side wholeheartedly with Western views.

However, there was also a balancing out that prevented the Church from being completely consumed by the Western way of thinking. Reformist leaders became concerned with absolutely opposing one viewpoint as they had done during Weimar, rightly feeling that their absolute rejection of communism and socialism had contributed to Hitler’s rise to power. Furthermore, there was also a fear by many Protestants of a Church completely free of the state as in America. A Church system free of state ties was something viewed as distinctly non-German, a complaint often heard in arguments in the Nazi time by both the German Christians and Confessing Church alike. For most Lutheran clergy, it was likely that the idea of a Church completely separated from state would be in violation of Luther’s Two Kingdoms doctrine. A more minority group even began to evaluate the advantages of the social policies of communism as potentially in better accord with the will of God. As a result, most of the dialogue surrounding the separation of East and West was similar to the dialogue mentioned surrounding a Christian’s role in the political sphere. Leaders like Karl Barth and Hans Iwand sought to distance themselves from the Western propaganda directed against the East and those with political motives in the new CDU, and instead instructed Christians to stay true to their beliefs and not to be caught up into political bickering. Essentially the only thing most Church officials were able to agree upon was that the segregation of Germany was counterproductive to the restorative process of the country.

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In order to understand the arguments of East and West, as contemporaries used these notions, one must understand the historical background of the conflict. The Potsdam Conference, which began on July 17th, 1945, set the conditions for the division and occupation of Germany. The Americans, British, and Russians, decided the country was to be divided into three zones, one for each country (with a fourth French zone added in 1947). In addition, Berlin was also divided into three (four in 1947) zones, and later served as a hotbed for the Cold War, as the Soviet Union and America squared off over the construction of the Berlin Wall. Beginning around 1946, with the famous “Iron Curtain” speech by former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the ideological conflict between Soviet Bolshevism and American Capitalism began to escalate. The metaphorical “Iron Curtain” was not an actual physical barrier, and travel through the four occupied zones was actually relatively easy and unregulated, with the exception of the time during the Berlin Airlift. Nevertheless, discussions emerged all throughout Germany over which course of action the country was to take: East, West, or perhaps an unknown third option. It was not until 1949, with the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the West, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR)

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138 The Soviet Occupation Zone in Berlin, (which was located in the heart of the larger Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany) blocked off the other occupations zones in the city over the introduction of new currencies. The Americans responded by flying in tons of supplies, and eventually forced the Soviets to end the blockade. This event clearly accentuated the conflict between East and West. See Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 86.

in the East, that a firm division of East and West can be seen. Nevertheless, Church leaders often added their voices to the dialogue over East and West.

The conflict between East and West is vital to understanding how the new political awareness developed by the Church was to pan out. The Church did not want to become overly involved in political arguments. However, given it also could no longer remain silent of issues of great importance, a fierce discussion emerged amongst the church hierarchy as to how they should deal with communism. The discussion really took off when the reform-minded leaders (Karl Barth, Martin Niemöller, etc.) issued an extremely interesting and divisive proclamation, The Darmstadt Statement of 1947, which expressed regret over blind hatred of the Communist Party. This furthered the divide between the old conservative group and the reformists, and opened up many of the old wounds that had been repaired during Treysa. \[^{140}\] This softening of the Church’s stance toward communism placed the reformists under a lot of political scrutiny, but it would ultimately describe much of the Church’s policy toward the East: a precarious balance on the fence, often with one foot on the Western side.

When evaluating the discussion of this issue between 1945 and 1949, it is best to work backwards, as the Church’s dilemma is perhaps best outlined by Karl Barth in an article from the journal *Unterwegs* in 1949 entitled “The Church between East and West.” This publication of Barth’s ideas is extremely valuable when discussing the topic, because it touches upon many of the important aspects of the dialogue. Barth says something of value about each of the three positions: those who supported the West, those who supported the East, and those looking to maintain neutrality (Barth himself). In the article, Barth describes the conflict between East and West as a political struggle for

\[^{140}\] Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 120.
power between Russia and America. He warns his audience immediately that he is not responding to talk over the subject to further political agendas, but rather to instruct Christians how to behave and handle political struggles. As discussed in the previous chapter, the article has a similar take to other messages from Barth and other reformers in regard to the Church’s political role. However, this conflict was the first real test to the Church’s newfound place in a volatile and dividing political arena.

Barth describes both Russia and America as “children of old Europe,” each with satellite states separated by the “Iron Curtain,” seeking to become the new “patron” of their “old Mother”. Barth admits that he has simplified the conflict in order to discuss what he really believes is important, which is to describe the nature of each country, both good and bad, and by doing so outline the course that the Church must take. He states that there are a few important things for a Christian to keep in mind when observing a conflict such as this. The first is that one must not be alarmed or overly startled by these events, and reminds Christians of the conflicts in the Bible between great nations. He also reminds them that all that happens on this Earth is under God’s guidance, so one must not fear the events that may unfold but instead take solace in his promises through faith. This is the typical answer one would expect from a pastor; however, he then delves into a commentary on what the conflict is truly about, and why the best thing a Christian can do in a time like this is to stay out of it.

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141 This line of thought is concurrent with the thesis of the German “Sonderweg” or special path. This idea argued that Germany should forge its own place in the world, outside of the direct influence of America, France, and Russia (after 1917). In many ways Barth seems to adopt this idea but from a Christian perspective, meaning that Christians in particular, should be concerned with getting too involved in the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States. See Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 9-12.
143 Barth, Karl. Pg 129.
144 Barth, Karl. Pg 133.
Why must a Christian avoid an issue of such importance one might ask, especially given the Church’s new role in politics? Barth’s answer is simple; neither side truly represents Christian values, since the conflict is essentially just an argument between two ideologies or ways of life. Neither Eastern socialism nor Western capitalism appeals to the Church, because each system has flaws. Barth then maintains that the only answer the Church can give is a loud and resounding “No” to the political forces of either side. Both sides lack the true values of God. Corruption and materialism in the West and the cold mechanical non-Christian East make it so the only option is to say “No” to both sides.\footnote{Barth, Karl. Pg 132-134.}

This “No” is considerably different from a refusal to be involved. The Church still must maintain its place speaking out against the wrongs doings of both sides, as dictated by the Bible, Barth maintains. This “No” must come in response to the Western calls for the church to take a side, as well as the Eastern violations of human rights. Barth says “…it does not follow by any means that it please Him (God) that we should simply give way to our Western prejudices and especially to the pressure of our Western environment. It follows rather that we must be all the more on our guard against regarding our Western judgment as the right and Christian judgment.”\footnote{Barth, Karl. Pg. 135.}

Essentially, just because the Church had found more of a voice in political affairs now, doesn’t mean it should fall in line with a particular political view. Instead, Barth argued a Christian must hold true to his beliefs in God. The Church also cannot completely ignore the Eastern point of view for a number of reasons. One of the most interesting arguments is that the East is non-Christian, not anti-Christian. The East does not attempt to twist the teachings of the Bible like the German Christians did; it simply has nothing to do with it. Barth’s
answer to this is simple. Christians must present the East with the hard undeniable truth of God. Another reason the East cannot simply be ignored is that the Eastern way of thinking is in reaction to some of the problems of the West, and therefore should not be dismissed lightly. Furthermore, the Church’s position as a mediator is not to follow one side blindly because one feels it is correct on our first assumption, but rather examine both sides more clearly. The Church must seek to rebuild and refocus all of Europe independent of the state’s influence, not simply bask in Western “righteousness” simply because as a Christian living in the West one may feel drawn to do so.

I chose this work by Karl Barth because it exemplifies two of the important facets of Church leaders’ interpretations of the situation. One reason was the oversimplification of terms like “East” and “West”. Although Barth attempted to work against stereotypes and narrow-minded views in his essay, his use of generalizing terms like the “East” and the “West”, undermined his argument and demonstrated the cookie-cutter ideas Church leaders had for the respective groups, as they increasingly adopted Cold War politicians’ own uses of the terms. The use of such terms accentuated stereotypes instead of bestowing a true understanding. Barth’s language was not uncommon, indeed many Church leaders used similar oversimplifying terms.147 This belittling of political ideologies was often used to further a specific agenda. In this case, it is used to show the shortcomings of each philosophy, and emphasize Barth’s solution. The second reason I chose this work by Barth is because it allows one to identify and examine some of the topics he mentions more closely, keeping in mind Barth’s position as a reform-minded Church leader. The most obvious theme in The Church between East and West is that the

Church must maintain a neutral perspective and focus on bringing Europe together. However, by reading through Barth’s reaction and criticism of each side, one can see that Christians were also lining themselves up with the West or to a certain extent, the East.

There is also a third reason to discuss Barth’s *The Church between East and West*. Since it was written in 1949, Barth was already long familiar with the arguments presented by both sides. More importantly, 1949 was a significant turning point for the conflict between East and West. Not only was this the year in which the FRG and GDR were formed, it also signified a significant change in Church policy for the East.\(^{148}\) From 1945-1949, Soviet forces, along with the other Allied forces, recognized the usefulness of the Protestant Church. As one of the only organizations they deemed to be “relatively untainted by corroboration with the Nazis,”\(^{149}\) the Soviets generally allowed the Church to reorganize and conduct their own denazification processes.\(^{150}\) As such, for the initial reconstruction period, the Church was given a sort of grace period that some historians describe as a “honeymoon.”\(^{151}\) As a result, a legitimate discussion took place between Church leaders during this brief interlude. However, from 1949-1953, the new communist-led government severely limited the influence Christianity had on education, which was in direct conflict with the Church’s goals to re-Christianize the nation.\(^{152}\)

Barth’s essay captures the various facets of the discussion that had taken place a few

\(^{148}\) Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 44.

\(^{149}\) Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 41.

\(^{150}\) Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 41. See also chapter II.

\(^{151}\) Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 41. The “honeymoon,” was the belief that Soviet leaders allowed the Church certain leeway in the initial reconstruction period after the war. There are many possible explanations for this, including not wanting to incite violence/protest, the lack of a concrete form of government, and higher authorities being unsure how the government situation would resolve itself.

\(^{152}\) This included preventing Christian students from attending institutions of higher education, removing teachers and faculty who did not share the communist point of view, and creating laws which required the Church to notify state authorities before undergoing many activities. The state also seized much of the Church’s landholdings. This was all done in direct violation of the constitutional right that guaranteed religious freedom. See Steigmann-Gall, Richard. Pg. 45. also see Chapter II for re-Christianization.
years prior, before the actions of the GDR and the Soviet Union served to turn the opinions’ of most prominent Church leaders against them.

Barth’s argument, that the Church must remain neutral, was championed by most of the reformist sect of the Church. Many of the reformists felt as though their strong anti-Communist sentiments had closed their eyes to Hitler. Niemöller believed that if the Church had not been so ardently opposed to communism, they would have protested Hitler’s imprisonment of over 100,000 communists. This in turn could have prevented the rise of National Socialism, and by extension, the war.\textsuperscript{153} The Darmstadt Statement, written two years earlier than Barth’s \textit{The Church between East and West}, (August 1947) clearly showed this sentiment. Composed by the Council of Brethren of the EKD, the Darmstadt Statement was greatly influenced by prominent Church leaders such as Karl Barth, Martin Niemöller, Hermann Diem and Hans Iwand, all of whom pushed for reform in the postwar period.\textsuperscript{154} The document as a whole was another admission of Church mistakes during the past decade and a half, and mentions particularly mistakes in believing about the German special mission, in forming the “Christian Front” which prevented the right of revolution, and finally in a failure to see any value in Marxist teachings.\textsuperscript{155} The third part of this document, the admission of failure in the past, is extremely interesting to the discourse on East against West. Brought forth here are two polarizing yet vital pieces to understanding the neutral point of view. The first piece was certainly influenced by Martin Niemöller. It says the Church made a mistake by ignoring

\textsuperscript{153} Niemöller, Martin. \textit{Of Guilt and Hope}. New York: Philosophical library Pg. 16. Also, see Chapter 2 for passage.
\textsuperscript{154} Hockenos, Matthew.  Pg. 122-124.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Statement by the Council of Brethren of the Evangelical church of Germany Concerning the Political Course of Our People}. Located in \textit{A Church Divided} from Matthew Translated from the Ecumenical Press Servey 31 (12 September 1947), 215. Hockenos appendix 6.
the “economic Materialism of Marxist teachings [which] ought to have reminded the Church of its task and its promise for the life and fellowship of men.”\textsuperscript{156} The recognition of past shortsightedness and regret is a common factor in Niemöller’s philosophy after the war, and continues a progression of introspection by the reformist Church leaders. Furthermore, the assertion of possible value to Marxist teachings goes a far way from the outright denial of all communist teachings that was present during Weimar, and speaks toward a desire to end enmity between the two groups.

One may ask then if the writers of the Darmstadt Statement did not favor the East, which critics were quick to suggest. However, there are two reasons why that simply cannot be the case. The first reason is within the document itself. It states “It is not the phrase ‘Christianity and Western Culture’ that the German people, and particularly we Christians, need today. What we need is a return to God and to the service of our neighbor…”\textsuperscript{157} Although this statement also rejects Western culture, it also does not insist that “Eastern philosophy” is the answer. This proves that the writers of this statement wanted to maintain adherence to Christian principles, as opposed to following either the West or the East. The remark of Western culture not being the answer, and the recognition of Marxist thought as having some value to the church, do not show the authors are lining up with the East, but instead show that the writers were concerned with Christians siding with the West and abandoning all other points of view. This sentiment is echoed in Barth’s publication \textit{The Church between East and West}, showing the problem was still visible two years later. There also was a definite fear amongst reformist members that this arguing back and forth would result in another war. As Barth puts it

\begin{footnotes}
\item[156] Darmstadt Statement, thesis 5.
\end{footnotes}
“All these choruses of hate and anger, the Western just as much as the Eastern, are going to lead to further destruction—as if enough had not been destroyed already!”\textsuperscript{158} This was the primary motivation between the reformers’ desires to remain neutral, and why the Darmstadt statement cannot be construed as pro-East; they hope to bring the two together to avoid war.

Actually, just about the only thing Protestant leaders could agree upon was the need to prevent another war—above all a nuclear war fought on German soil. Coincidentally, this often meant working alongside communists and workers’ unions. Although a majority of prominent Protestant leaders were more passive in their involvement, a minority faction of Protestants and Church leaders, particularly Martin Niemöller, worked closely with labor factions and communists to protest rearmament and the arms race. However, in the EKD the topic was extremely divisive for two reasons. First, the Church itself being split between East and West led to a conflict of interests, as members from the West obviously looked at issues like the joining of NATO by the FRG differently than members in the East. Secondly, the adherence to Luther’s Two Kingdoms doctrine essentially absolved many leaders from having to either support or oppose the idea of rearmament, which, of course, just as in the Nazi period, made a majority of the Church silent proponents of rearmament in the late 40’s early 50’s.\textsuperscript{159}

However, for the more active minority, this meant taking a pacifist stance in political debates.\textsuperscript{160} They protested against the joining of NATO by the West,\textsuperscript{161} Soviet

\textsuperscript{158} Barth, Karl. Pg. 144.
\textsuperscript{159} Cooper, Alice Holmes.\textit{ Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements since 1945.} Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1996 Pg. 45-50.
\textsuperscript{160} Jarausch, Konrad. pg 42.
\textsuperscript{161} Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 35.
prisons in the East,\textsuperscript{162} and the arms race, often in conjunction with members of the SPD and KPD.\textsuperscript{163} Most Church leaders however, wanted to simply see an end to the divisions altogether. Hans Asmussen, a leading Lutheran pastor and supporter of the West, often wrote to pastors and deacons serving under him. In a letter written in 1946, he calls for prayers to end the “Iron Curtain,” so that “brothers can again be brothers, fathers can return to their sons, and daughters to their mothers.”\textsuperscript{164}

Hans Iwand took up the cause of peace between East and West with admirable vigor. In addition to writing the Darmstadt Statement, he organized the “Haus der helfenden Hände” (House of the helping Hands) for refugees from East Prussia,\textsuperscript{165} and dedicated almost his entire career in an attempt to bring peace between the East and the West.\textsuperscript{166} During a speech in 1948 in Berlin, he said, “If an angel from heaven should look at what has taken place in the East, he wouldn’t see Germans, and Poles, and Russians; he would see such wrongdoings, and unjust suffering.”\textsuperscript{167} Unfortunately, the ability of the Church to influence the conflict in any way outside of their congregations was limited because of the scope of the conflict. The only sort of success they achieved early on was in relation to the pacifist movements, as Protestants often teamed up with

\textsuperscript{162} Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin. Bestand 2/208. Letter from the office of the EKD requesting the release of a pastor in prison in the soviet sector so that he may be reunited with his family. July 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1946.
\textsuperscript{163} Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 151.
\textsuperscript{165} During the redistribution of land after the end of the war, a vast majority of the territory seized by Germans in parts of Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, and even parts of Eastern Prussia were divided up between the various nations. As a result thousands of German refugees were rounded up and driven mercilessly by local residents out of the country. This resulted in widespread homelessness, and quite often death. See Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 33.
\textsuperscript{167}Iwand, Hans. Vorwart, pg. II. Vorwart, pg. III. „Wenn ein Engel vom Himmel sehen würde, was im Osten geschehen ist, er würde ja nicht Deutsche und Polen und Russen sehen, er würde solche sehen, die Unrecht tun und solche, die Unrecht leiden.
other organizations for a larger effect. Ultimately, as the Cold War raged, the increasingly pro-Western stance taken by the majority of Protestant Leaders challenged the neutrality sought by the reformist party and Eastern sympathizers. Beginning in 1949, the actions of GDR against organized religion undermined the efforts of the reformers and Eastern supporters to limit Western influence.

There can be little doubt that most Church leaders felt as though Bolshevism was a challenge to Christianity. This can be said specifically of Lutherans, as they viewed the strong secular views of communism as an immediate threat on spreading the Gospel. This distrust toward communism went back a long ways for Protestants, and most likely prejudice and old hatreds influenced their opinions. Even before the attack on Christian education in the GDR in the early 1950s, Lutheran Pastor Otto Dibelius rebuked Soviet occupiers for limiting the Church’s access to schoolrooms for education purposes. Western supporters levied multiple reasons for fighting communism, and also pointed out reasons to support the Americans and American-style democracy. This viewpoint had considerably more support then communism, and given the strength of the argument presented against the Soviets, it is no wonder that Karl Barth took such an effort to attempt to minimize its effect.

The viewpoint of Church leaders when viewing communism is relatively easy to understand. For one, communism in and of itself was based on secular principles instead of biblical ones, so on its most basic level church leaders had an argument against it. Additionally, anger toward Russians was at a high for many Germans for a number of reasons, including harsh treatment after the war, removing East Prussia from German

168 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 16,18.
territory, and POW camps. In addition, the rape of thousands of women and girls during
the occupation of Berlin dramatically reinforced public opinion.\textsuperscript{170} Werner Hoppe even
wrote to pastor Otto Dibelius that “It is necessary for all Christian forces to come
together, for the security of the faithful, not only in Germany, and if need be begin an
open uncovered battle against communism…”\textsuperscript{171} This was most likely in response to
Soviet actions against the Church, as “already since the founding of the GDR in 1949, the
communist regime had tried to curb the public presence of the churches, by resorting to
polemical press campaigns, threatening or arresting individual parish priests, and launching a
major attack on the \textit{Junge Gemeinde}, a Protestant youth group.”\textsuperscript{172} The results of these
policies in the GDR would directly influence the membership rate in the East, marking a 25%
decrease from 1950-1964.\textsuperscript{173} Furthermore, actions taken by the Soviets in other Eastern
countries (such as the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the worker protests in the GDR
in 1953) would only strengthen Western supporters’ arguments (across both the GDR and
FRG) in the future.

Perhaps the most effective criticism against the Soviets came from pastors living
in the Soviet occupation zone. Hans Iwand stated Hans Asmussen (who lived in the
Soviet sector) “expresses a thorough revulsion against Socialism,”\textsuperscript{174} and other pastors
who had first hand encounters with the Soviet troops in 1945 said the “council (Council
of Brethren of the EKD) failed to recognize that the Soviet secret police were as insidious

\textsuperscript{171} EZA, Bestand 2/278. Letter to Otto Dibelius from Werner H.M. Hoppe. Stuttgart June 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1949. Original “Es gilt alle christlichen Kräfte, nicht nur in Deutschland, zussamenfassen und den offenen, zur
Sicherheit der Gläubigen gegebefals gedeckten Kampf gegen den Kommunismus zu beginnen…”
\textsuperscript{173} Ziemann, Benjamin. Pg. 4.
\textsuperscript{174} Iwand, Hans. Pg. 18. „seinen gründlichen Abscheu gegen den Sozialismus zum Ausdruck zu bringen.“
a threat to Christianity as the Gestapo had been.”\textsuperscript{175} These criticisms resonated harshly with Eastern sympathizers and those like Iwand who wanted to try and preserve peace, as their arguments could not be marginalized as part of the Western propaganda machine.

Others also pointed out the benefits of democracy and the American political system. Many Germans viewed Americans fondly when compared to Russians, as the treatment rendered by Americans toward Germans during the initial rebuilding period fostered a good relationship between the two. Likewise, the Berlin Airlift and inclusion in the Marshall Plan also forged a strong link between Germans and Americans.\textsuperscript{176} Despite the conflicts over rearmament and the charge of collective guilt, most Church leaders, and undoubtedly their congregations, felt much closer to the Americans then the Russians. This was because many Church leaders sought to reaffirm the Church’s old position as opponents of communism.\textsuperscript{177} Some Protestants also pointed out the advantages of democracy, and often argued that its freedom and overall structure was best suited for Christianity.\textsuperscript{178}

There was, however, a small minority who argued that the Marxist social world view was beneficial to the Church, as it kept the focus on maintaining and providing for those less fortunate. These communist sympathizers can rarely be seen as supporters of Marxism in its entirety, but instead they picked out certain aspects of the philosophy that they could apply to Christianity. Moreover, many of those labeled as Eastern backers held little love for communism, and instead sought to find ways in which to either mend

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\textsuperscript{175} Hockenos, Matthew. \textit{A church divided.} Pg. 121.
\textsuperscript{176} Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 105-107.
\textsuperscript{177} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 121.
\textsuperscript{178} EZAB. Bestand 2/272. Writing by Gunner Myrdal, The American Belief.
\end{flushright}
relationships with Russia, or minimize the effect of Western influence.\textsuperscript{179} Hans Asmussen, in his essay \textit{The Political Responsibility of Christians}, claimed Barth’s theological arguments were as bad as communist itself. After arguing that Barth’s theology contradicted the writings of Paul and Luke, he said “Not for nothing, than each theologian [Barth] that disagrees with Paul and Luke, are exactly the same as those that easily get something positive out of communism. For communism, it is characteristic to freely take God from the stars and human history.”\textsuperscript{180} When viewed in this way, Karl Barth and other reformers were seen as communist supporters. However, their desire to remain neutral did separate them from some of the more radical clergy. Such radicals often focused on the social policies of communism, arguing that the provisions they made for those in need better served God’s will then the waste and materialism associated with Western capitalism. One such example from a coalition of pastors for the socialist party stated “Help with the struggle for social justice and honest peaceful charity in our nation.”\textsuperscript{181} Examples such as this concisely demonstrate the appeal socialism could hold for Protestants. Although these arguments seemed to garner little support from Western proponents, they did help to balance out the Church’s overall position in the Cold War.

The instructions laid out by Karl Barth in \textit{The Church between East and West} can be viewed as the quintessential reformist viewpoint. His ideas fall directly in line with the Darmstadt Statement, whose author Hans Iwand would serve a long campaign in an attempt to forge peace between the two sides. However, Barth’s warnings against

\textsuperscript{179} See outrage to the Darmstadt Statement, Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 121-132.


Western propaganda and Eastern civil rights violations are of great value when put into context with the opposing supporter’s viewpoints. His call for caution against the Western propaganda should not be taken lightly, considering the wide support the West received from Protestants, and his reminders of the civil rights violations of the East would serve to remind those who sympathized with the social policies of Marxism. The Cold War would serve as a severe test to the Church’s newfound political voice, as both superpowers sought to bring them in under their collective umbrellas. Although Protestants’ fears of the GDR’s intents toward organized religion were well founded, the counter-argument provided by Iwand and others shows that the Church would no longer sit aside for political affairs, nor would it allow itself to be controlled completely by any particular state. Although the Cold War would only worsen in the decades to come, reformist Christians in the West would hold onto their neutrality, and often repeat many of the same sentiments first mentioned in *The Church between East and West.* Ever the minority, reformist leaders like Barth, Niemöller, and Iwand, faced considerable scrutiny on their proposed neutrality, but overall their refusal to be brought to follow political trends would strengthen the Church’s independence in political affairs. Although traditional Lutherans threatened to push the Church completely against the Soviets in the East, leaders like Barth prevented this from taking place, thus continuing to redefine the adherence to Luther’s Two Kingdoms and ultimately the Church’s relationship to the state.

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Among the myriad of problems faced by Protestant Church leaders in the years immediately following 1945, none was more loathsome and controversial than the question of guilt, specifically toward the Jewish people. Most members of the former Confessing Church viewed themselves as part of the resistance, since their sovereignty had come under constant attack under the Nazi Regime. Many Germans in general, felt as though they were the true victims of the Nazis. After all, their cities were in ruins, their country dismantled, many of their men dead, and women raped.\textsuperscript{183} It was for this reason that the Allied charge of the “collective guilt of the German people” was met with such contempt and disdain. For Church leaders, this placed them between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, as the spiritual leaders of the country, they both felt the need for and were pressured by the Allies and the World Council of Churches to admit fault in the Nazis’ crimes and to seek God’s forgiveness—although they themselves did not necessarily see themselves as guilty.\textsuperscript{184} On the other hand, they were trying to provide for the needs of their parishes, and were extremely concerned with welcoming people back into the folds of the Church after the massive exodus during the war. They felt that by taking too strong a stance on guilt, they risked alienating too many members. In addition, leading pastors viewed the rise of National Socialism as the nation’s punishment for turning away from God, not because they themselves felt directly responsible for the Nazi atrocities. As such, discussions of guilt were complicated for most Protestant clergy.

Lutheran leaders emphasized a private declaration before God (which limited open public

\textsuperscript{183} Hockenos, Matthew D.. \textit{A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past}. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Pg. 42.

\textsuperscript{184} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 77-78.
discussion), if at all, and even reformist members like Karl Barth maintained the Church’s place as part of the resistance. Indeed, clergy expectations and ideas about admitting guilt were diverse and complex. Only a handful of prominent Protestant leaders, like Hermann Diem and Martin Niemöller, seemed honestly interested in engaging in a discussion of responsibility and making a public declaration of guilt.

What discussion there was about German and Protestant guilt was centered primarily on three different events. The first of which was the *Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt*, which in and of itself sparked great debate. The document is a vague admission of the Church’s failure to act more decisively against the Nazi State, and was not well received amongst many Church leaders and congregations alike because it was seen to be an admittance of “collective guilt”. Along with the document came a notable discourse on national guilt as opposed to personal guilt, as well as a publicized discussion between Lutheran Bishop Theophil Wurm (who was the leading Bishop of the EKD) and the Archbishop of Canterbury in England. The second event was undeniably the most distasteful for Protestants: The Nuremberg trials. Led primarily by American forces, the Nuremberg trials brought up feelings of resentment for most Protestant Church leaders, as they believed the procedure was both counterproductive to the healing of the nation and hypocritical since it did not take into account Allied war crimes. The third and final topic was a discussion of Anti-Semitism and Judaism, as the Church tried to reassess its position toward the Jews. A variety of sources discussed this in detail, most notably Karl Barth’s radio broadcast in 1949 entitled *The Jewish Problem and the Christian Answer*, the *Message Concerning the Jewish Question* issued by the Council of Brethren of the
Evangelical Church in 1948, and the *Statement on the Jewish Question* from the Synod of the Evangelical Church in 1950.

These three topics would be problem areas for the Church, primarily because, unlike their conversations about political discourse, this was not something that could be fixed by a change in policy or mindset. Germany’s relationship to Jews would be an ongoing struggle for decades to come, and feelings of guilt and questions of responsibility would rise up again with the new generation of the late 1960’s, when it became important for teenagers and young adults to ask their parents what they did during the Third Reich. Nevertheless, the Church’s reluctance to conduct a complete introspection is understandable (if that was even possible) since these topics were compounded upon some dire needs like food and housing for everyday life, redefining some of the Church’s policies in the wake of Nazism, and Allied occupation and policies like denazification. All of these factors limited the Church’s talk about guilt, as well as muddled any discussion held with political motives. Nevertheless, pastors like Martin Niemöller would make an honest attempt to critique the past actions of Church and himself, while others would demonstrate, through their very attempts to marginalize the issues, that such topics were not something that could easily be explained away and swept under the rug.

The *Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt*, written by the EKD council in 1945, was one of the first official responses by the Church that dealt directly with guilt. Unlike the

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186 As discussed in Chapter 2
Message to the Congregations, the document was fractious for two reasons. For one, Church leaders were undecided as to how to address the problem of guilt. For another, the Church was wary of the document becoming too much of a political driving force that would have a negative public impact. The Church was extremely concerned with alienating their parishes, as any admission of guilt could (and was) seen as subordination to the Allied powers. However, they also felt the need to make some form of declaration, since almost all notable pastors believed a failure to admit guilt would belittle the need for repentance before God. The Church was also pressured by a number of pastors from abroad (including Karl Barth) and the World Council of Churches, to provide some form of declaration of responsibility to restore credibility and allow the Church to enter into more international discussions.

Eventually, those writers who advocated a more forthcoming document (Hans Asmussen, Martin Neimöller, and Wilhelm Niesel) convinced the more reluctant leaders (Bishop Wurm, Bishop Hans Meiser) for the need of a candid declaration. Even so, the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt (October 1945) was not overly critical, and in fact the

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187 This is often referred to as the Treysa Declaration/Conference, since that was where the council held its meeting. The document was discussed in Chapter 2, as historians primarily see it as a document in which Church leaders made compromises on a number of issues, including responsibility and guilt, in order to promote unity. The document does mention the Church in opposition to the Nazis and warns of people attempting to shirk responsibility, but does so in a very passive way, not mentioning names nor even directly stating the Church failed to do so. It’s for that reason that I tend to agree with a majority of historians and don’t believe the true purpose of the document was to discuss guilt, unlike the Stuttgart Declaration.

188 Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 71

189 Who as mentioned in Chapter 1, had returned to Switzerland.

190 By international discussions I am referring to the Church taking an active role in the World Council of Churches and promote Christianity throughout Europe. This was particularly important for pastors like Karl Barth, see Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 76-77.

191 Also included are Superintendent Hahn, Otto Dibelius, Landesoberkirchenrat Lilje, Superintendent Held, and Dr. Heinemann.
Message to the Pastors,\textsuperscript{192} which was released two months earlier, had been far more so. The two most self-disparaging phrases are “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: through us endless suffering has been brought to many peoples and countries.”\textsuperscript{193} This statement affirms an important theme of the Protestant Church’s initial response to dealing with the aftermath of the Holocaust. The statement makes mention of Germany’s own suffering, which was the common perspective for most Germans since it focused on their own difficulties. The acknowledgement that suffering had been brought to others was undermined by the limited admission that was to follow. Absent was mention of the Church’s failure to take a stand against anti-Semitism and its initial support for Hitler. Instead it mentions failure only “for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently.”\textsuperscript{194} The impending fallout from this document was not foreseen by the writers, even if they were aware of the possible twist the document could receive from news outlets or political forces seeking to blame all Germans for the tragic results of the Second World War.\textsuperscript{195}

Parishioners and local pastors were outraged by the implications of the document, most likely because they believed it accepted the unofficial but widely mentioned Allied

\textsuperscript{192} Issued by the Brethren Council in August 1945, the Message to the Pastors cites the failure of parishes to live up to Barmen, and calls for a reordering of the Church. It was also discussed in Chapter 2 in reference to maintaining a public relationship. The fact that guilt was discussed more openly, suggests that Church leaders were much more willing to discuss the topic in their own circle, where they did not fear the public stating they were siding with the enemy.


\textsuperscript{194} Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt.

\textsuperscript{195} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg 81. Hans Asmussen, upon distributing the document to the ecumenical delegation, warned against the possible political misuse that could come from the document. Hockenos appendix 2.
Despite the backlash against it, key Church leaders defended the document and encouraged parishioners to admit past mistakes before God. Wilhelm Niesel described the parishioners’ reaction to the document in a letter in 1945. He said that the declaration “did not come as a relief. It did not remain without violent opposition and many protests.” He credited fear, pride, and, once again, a failure of enemies to admit guilt in their own crimes, for the population’s reluctance to admit guilt, but nonetheless encouraged German Protestants to admit fault and do penance. He said “…the Word of the Lord commands us to do penitence. We must go back to Christ, and be delivered by Him from the ban of guilt that we have burdened ourselves with.” He would also further his “endorsement” for the document stating “…whereas the Stuttgart declaration made a deep impression on the representatives of the Christians Churches throughout the world and was received gratefully and with deep understanding.”

Obviously this statement also reflected the pressure exerted by outside forces on the Church Council, but the continued defense of the document by Niesel in spite of opposition reflects the conviction Church leaders felt in a need for admission of guilt. Niemöller in particular, felt driven to repent, and expressed great sentiments of remorse.

However, the leaders were divided on what form of guilt they would be accepting. Some felt an admission of guilt meant the Church as good Christians would accept the blame for the country because it was the moral thing to do, not because they themselves

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196 This was the idea that the German people as a whole were collectively guilty for WWII and the Holocaust. Although it was never said in any official statement, the idea was widespread and vehemently opposed by most Germans in the early postwar period. See Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 57-58.

197 For more information on the public backlash, see Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 84-91.

198 Niesel, Wilhelm. EZAB Bestand 2/36.

199 Niemöller, Martin. Of Guilt and Hope. New York: Philosophical library Pg. 15.
felt directly responsible. Others felt individuals should admit their own faults and repent, and denied the charge of national guilt. The most radical of leaders wanted a complete examination of the past, and wished to express feelings of regret on three fronts; on behalf of the Church, on behalf of the nation, and from a more personal level. Church leaders also disagreed on how any form of guilt was to be confessed. Should there be a public declaration in front of a congregation or in writing, should it be a private thing between the individual and God, or should it be a combination of both? The answers varied from Protestant to Protestant, and were often dictated by the religious affiliation (Lutheran or otherwise) and by whether or not they felt the Confessing Church had truly resisted the Nazis. Regardless of the stance taken by Church leaders, one thing is certain: The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt brought about a significant discussion about responsibility, repentance, and guilt.

The debate over what form of guilt Church leaders would accept was diverse and difficult to decipher, because discussions are overlaid by such intricate politics. Most likely, the view held by Bishop Wurm and Hans Meiser, that Christians would accept guilt only because it was the “good Christian thing to do,” not because they were responsible, was the one most Protestants agreed with. This is certainly evident in the protests of The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, but also in protests to the Nuremberg trials and calls for Allies to admit their own crimes. A majority of Church leaders

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200 Leaders like Martin Niemöller and Hermann Diem (two of the most active leaders against the Nazis) argued that the Church had not stood up strongly enough, or not truly resisted the Nazis. See Niemöller” Of Guilt and Hope, and Diem: Haben wir Deutschen etwas gelernt. A majority of other Church leaders insisted the Confessing Church had actively opposed the Nazis and, more importantly, the German Christians.

201 Jarausch, Konrad. Pg. 7-8.

202 One particular event of note was the firebombing of Dresden in which three air raids conducted consecutively, burned the undefended cultural metropolis to the ground. I will discuss this in more detail
were willing to accept a charge of guilt only because they were willing to accept the blame for the nation straying so far from God, not because they thought they had done anything definitively wrong that warranted such an admission. They also promoted a private confession\(^{203}\) of past mistakes, which was the traditional method for Lutherans. Lutheran Church leaders, in comparison to the clergy of the Reformed Churches, were also the most vocal in expressing their displeasure for certain Allied policies and rules. These views can be seen best in a letter from Bishop Wurm to the English Archbishop of Canterbury and his parishes.

Written only two months after the *Stuttgart Declaration* (December 14\(^{th}\), 1945), Wurm’s letter, entitled *To the Christians of England*,\(^{204}\) was a clear attempt to regain some favor with the general populace in the wake of the protests against Stuttgart. Wurm praises the Archbishop and the international community for accepting the *Stuttgart Declaration* and for welcoming the German Church as a brother. However, he also critiques the Allied forces and viewpoints. He says “…the victory of the Allied powers was not simply the victory of good over evil. The military conquest and occupation of our country was accompanied by the very same acts of violence against the civilian population, about which such just complaint has been made in the countries of the Allies.”\(^{205}\) The message here takes on a familiar theme for postwar Germany. Wurm’s focus on Germans as victims and the Allies as something other than heroes is an important distinction. It suggests that although Wurm is willing to admit fault in the

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\(^{203}\) By this I mean an admission of guilt between an individual and God, not a confession between a congregation member and a priest in private, like in the Catholic Church.  

\(^{204}\) Wurm, Theophil. *To the Christians of England*. Translated by Herman, Stewart. *The Rebirth of the German Church* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), 275-279. (Original Citation) Found in Hockenos Appendix 5.  

\(^{205}\) Wurm, Theophil. *To the Christians of England*.  

shortly. Also consistently mentioned was the Russian execution of thousands of Polish officers toward the end of the war.
actions of Germany, he is not willing to accept all of the blame. He accredits the rise of Nazism to a number of factors, including the crippling and unjust reparations of the Treaty of Versailles, and the collective secularization of Europe. England and the other Allies, he rightly points out, attacked civilians and killed innocents just as Germany did. For the Allies to stand and accuse Germans of their crimes while completely dismissing their own was hypocritical, Wurm insisted.

Wurm also warns against a culture of revenge stating “…nobody will be benefited if injustice is paid back by still greater injustice.” Wurm felt that many of the Allied policies were unjust, especially denazification, and was interested in drawing attention to the wrongs of the Allies as well as attempting to garner more international support for Germans. He was also concerned with the Allied government creating a situation similar to that in which Hitler was able to seize power. He particularly likens the Allied charge of “collective guilt” to that of Germany being solely responsible for WWI in the Treaty of Versailles. He says “If the political authorities of today act according to the same recipe, and seek to make Germany as small and as weak as possible, and its neighbors as great and strong as possible, then the evil spirits of revenge and retribution will be banished from the world.” This deviation from the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt is especially important because of Wurm’s position as the leader of the EKD. His admission of guilt in this document is minor, especially when compared to his rebukes of Allied command and

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206 Germany was deemed solely responsible for the First World War at the peace talks in Versailles, and consequently was forced to pay Britain and France (amongst others) millions in war reparations (amongst other things). This severely crippled the German economy and led to massive inflation in the early 1920’s. Many Germans and historians alike accredited this to the rise of National Socialism, because it set conditions in which people would readily agree to extremist movements.

207 Wurm, Theophil. To the Christians of England.

208 Wurm, Theophil. To the Christians of England.
his warnings of a cycle of revenge. Wurm’s acceptance of guilt is so only as a Christian who failed to prevent a tragedy, not as a man in repentance for his crimes.

Wurm, like a majority of the former Confessing Church, also consistently viewed the Church’s position as a stark opponent to the Nazism. 209 His statement in To the Christians of England suggests as much: “We Christians in Germany affirm and accept in the same way [as the Church of England] our responsibility and concern for the whole world. Even under the tyranny of National Socialism we refused to abandon this sense of responsibility and concern.” 210 This statement reinforces Wurm’s acquiescence of guilt as only a national or even worldwide acceptance. 211 Even the reformist Karl Barth shared a similar view, as heard in his lecture at Düsseldorf in 1946. Titled The Christian Message in Europe Today, Barth states:

It is obvious that the Christian Churches here in Germany and in other lands have sided whole-heartedly with that just and necessary resistance against the great revolutionary danger. At least, they took the side of those forces which remained more of less steadfast in the face of this threat…Above all there can be no doubt that during those years, thanks to the existence and the effective working of the Church, it has been possible

209 A point I refute in Chapter 1.
210 Wurm, Theophil. To the Christians of England.
211 Also worth noting, Wurm received a large number of responses to his Message to the Christians of England, from all types of Germans. Matthew Hockenos makes notes of a few of them, which include a Catholic principle, anonymous pastors, members of the Church, and former Nazis. Their letters praise Wurm’s attack on the Allied point of view. They make note of Versailles, the bombing at Dresden, the mistreatment of German POWs, and the displaced millions of the Eastern territories. See Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 111-117.
for countless individuals to walk through the darkness of the age as men who have found salvation and protection…

Barth’s mention of the “great revolutionary danger” was in reference to the modernization and secularization of modern Europe which challenged the old Europe. Church leaders were quick to blame the rise in secular thought and the abandonment of God’s word as causes for the Second World War and the Holocaust, and viewed themselves as combatants to these principles. Barth also held a similar affinity toward blaming all of Europe for the events of the late 30’s and early 40’s. He specifically mentions the Olympic Games in Munich in 1936 in which all the world “gathered around the swastika,” and concludes his argument with: “All this was evidence that the great German mistake was fundamentally a great European mistake.”

The agreement of two men like Barth and Wurm, a Calvinist reformer and a traditional Lutheran, goes to show the feelings a majority of Church leaders held. Even though Barth advocated such wide reforms in matters of political responsibility and forming a new European Church, in comparison to Wurm’s desires to maintain the old setup of regional Churches and simply refocus the Church’s message, their agreement here is significant. It also explains why so few Protestants would respond to the efforts of Herman Diem and Martin Niemöller, whose admissions of guilt were far more forthcoming and who viewed the Church’s role during the Third Reich in a much different light. Furthermore, many Lutheran pastors

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212 Barth, Karl. *Against the Stream*. Pg. 172
213 Barth, Karl. *Against the Stream*. Pg. 169.
214 As discussed in more detail in Chapter 2
also pointed to Luther’s Two Kingdoms doctrine, and argued that they acted on that basis in the proper manner at the time.²¹⁵

Martin Niemöller’s most significant legacy would come in his acceptance and forthrightness in admitting his own faults during Hitler’s reign. He emerged from years of solitary confinement in Nazi concentration camps a changed man. Having spent countless hours in self-reflection, Niemöller entered into postwar Germany with a renewed vigor and a true desire to bring change to the Church. However, at least initially, his opinions on guilt were not looked highly upon by a majority of Protestant leaders. Perhaps his most famous poem, which is posted prominently in the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (Memorial Site of German Resistance) in Berlin, demonstrates the depth of his confession. As he so eloquently puts it:

When the Nazis came for the communists, I remained silent; I was not a communist. When the Nazis came for the Social Democrats, I remained silent; I was not a Social Democrat. When the Nazis came for the trade unionists, I remained silent; I was not a trade unionist. When the Nazis came for the Jews, I remained silent; I was not a Jew. When they came for me, there was no one left who could protest.²¹⁶

This kind of open, emotional testimony would set Niemöller apart from many of his colleagues. His mentioning of Jews and communists was an important step for

²¹⁵ See Chapter 2.
²¹⁶ Niemöller, Martin. Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand. Als die Nazis die Kommunisten holten, habe ich geschwiegen; Ich war ja kein Kommunist...Sozialdemokrat... Gewerkschafter...Jude...Als sie mich holten, gab es keinen mehr der protestieren konnte.”
Niemöller in the aftermath of the war, because it brought to light the depth of his transformation after his imprisonment in the concentration camps Sachsenhausen and Dachau, since in the early 1930’s he had expressed sentiments of serious anti-Semitism.\textsuperscript{217} Indeed, as one could see through his poetic work, Niemöller was also critical of the Church’s reluctance during the Third Reich. In 1946 he wrote “I think we Christians belonging to the Confessional Church have all the reasons for saying; ‘My fault, my own grievous fault.’\textsuperscript{218} Niemöller also urges all Germans to come forth in a public declaration of faults and wrongdoings. He specifically mentions the tendency of people to “shove guilt over to his neighbor.” Niemöller did not believe that the practice of constantly blaming others for what had happened, particularly in the military when each soldier passed blame up the ranks, was conducive to a true Christian confession. In his eyes, every German had something to feel guilty about: “The guilt exists there is no doubt about it. Even if there were no other guilt than that of the six million clay urns, containing the ashes of burnt Jews from all over Europe.”\textsuperscript{219} Both of these opinions were part of minority for Protestants, and especially amongst Protestant leaders. Niemöller initially would receive little agreement from others. However eventually, these sorts of opinions along with his tireless work in political pacifism would solidify his legacy as a leading figure of the rebuilding of the Protestant Church and the Church’s resistance movement.

One of the only other Protestant leaders who voiced a similar opinion as Niemöller, especially when evaluating the Church’s role from 1933-1945, was Hermann Diem. His most influential work was written in December of 1947 entitled: \textit{Have we

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\textsuperscript{218} Niemöller, Martin. \textit{Of Guilt and Hope}. Pg 15.
\textsuperscript{219} Niemöller, Martin. \textit{Of Guilt and Hope}. Pg. 14.
Germans learned something? Although Diem also says “…the false discourse from the Collective guilt [accusation] has created a lot of misery…”\textsuperscript{220} he also firmly states the actions by the Protestant Church during the Third Reich were often passive and slow in response. He asks if the Christian community has learned something from the result of the Nazi period, and challenges them to bring forth Christ “not only to the Church, but also into the World.”\textsuperscript{221} Ultimately, Diem also received little support for his forthrightness and critical view of the past. As historian Doris Bergen put it “Diem sought an authentic new beginning in the Protestant Church based on honest acknowledgement of guilt…But Diem, whose record as an opponent of National Socialism was spotless, found…little support.”\textsuperscript{222}

The varying perspectives toward guilt were a lasting issue for Protestant Church members, and for Germany as a whole. This issue was not easily agreed upon or solved, and even if a specific course of action would have been decided, the issue undoubtedly would have still resurfaced for future generations. One thing Protestant leaders did seem to be able to agree upon was the damaging effect both the charge of collective guilt and the denazification\textsuperscript{223} policies had. Both of these points would come to a head with the Nuremberg war criminal trials. The resentment for both the perceived injustices of the trials and collective guilt would bring Protestants to the forefront of the defense in many criminal trials for Nazi soldiers. Historian Benjamin Ziemann writes,

“The Protestants…resenting the gross injustice of this invented verdict (collective guilt)…put in a

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\textsuperscript{220} Diem, Hermann. \textit{Haben wir Deutschen etwas gelernt.} Zollikon-Z"urick: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948. “…der falschen Rede von der "Kolletivschuld" viel Unheil angerichtet worden…Pg. 6

\textsuperscript{221} Diem, Hermann. \textit{Haben wir Deutschen etwas gelernt.} Da"er Christus nicht nur in der Kirche, sondern auch in der Welt…pg. 11.


\textsuperscript{223} See chapter 2 for more details.
word for the defendants in many of the postwar trials against Wehrmacht officers and other Nazi perpetrators. “224 Bishop Wurm in particular, as one might expect from the sentiments he portrayed in To the Christians of England, took offense to the hypocritical position the Allies had placed themselves in.

Although Wurm’s comparison of Nazi atrocities to Allied war crimes is problematic on a variety of levels, his argument was valid in the fact that the Allies refused to even address their own areas of questionable conduct. One example of Allied war crimes that was consistently referenced by Germans was the firebombing of Dresden. Dresden was well known as a city of cultural wealth, famous for its art galleries, operas, churches, and cites of historical significance. 225 During the war, it was a city of economical and commercial significance because of its role as a transportation center and factories, although it was not a city with a truly significant military presence. However, at the time of the bombing February 13th-15th, 1945, Allied victory had essentially been assured, and therefore the complete decimation of a city with minimal military value was often seen as an act of revenge.

On February 13, 1945 the British Royal Air Force began a series of air raids against the city. Dresden was not equipped to deal with the long-range high-altitude British bombers, and the anti-aircraft guns in the city could not reach the altitude the bombers flew at. Consequently, three waves of British bombers armed with incendiary weapons devastated the city. Ultimately, the timing of the raids meant that the second wave of British fighters unleashed their payloads directly upon the rescue workers

attempting to clean up after the first wave. The British lost only five fighters, and only one to enemy fire.\textsuperscript{226}

American bombers in accompany with fighter escort arrived the next day. Three consecutive waves of B-17s, also armed with incendiary weapons, kept the city burning overnight. 211 British B-17’s followed the America attack the next day (February 15\textsuperscript{th}) to complete the three day long onslaught.\textsuperscript{227} Ultimately, approximately 35,000 Dresden inhabitants lost their lives in the air raids, but the emotional loss of the cultural epicenter of Germany was an equally damaging blow for many Germans.\textsuperscript{228} The raids themselves sparked a torrent of debate. Allied command’s use of total warfare against civilian populations created controversy, but it was not as if the city had no military value as a supply cache. In actuality the bombing of Dresden can be seen as an act of vengeance in a war that had long ago abandoned normal codes of conduct. For Germans in the immediate postwar period, the fact that the Allies refused to even discuss some of their own violations of the Geneva Conference was the height of hubris, and therefore many Germans saw the Nuremberg trials as simply the victors of war imposing punishment on the losers.

Bishop Wurm followed this line of thought in his arguments against the Nuremberg Trials. In a letter Wurm wrote to General Lucius D. Clay,\textsuperscript{229} one can see the numerous issues many Protestants had with the trials. Wurm actually cites a number of practical reasons why he thinks the trials were unfair, and in turn, irrelevant in their attempts to find justice. First, he starts off describing the “Handicap of the Defense

\textsuperscript{227} De Bruhl, Marshall. Pg. 250.
\textsuperscript{228} De Bruhl, Marshall. Pg. 273.
\textsuperscript{229} The American general who served as Eisenhower’s right hand man, and a key administrator in postwar Germany. He is particularly well known for planning the Berlin Airlift.
against the Prosecution.”²³⁰ He claims the defense were at a significant disadvantage in both time (the Allies preparing for the prosecution for a number of years), and resources. Second he mentions that the defense was not given ample time to review the documents used in the prosecution, and states that documentation the defense would require for their case is not readily provided by Allied (in this case Washington) command. He also mentions difficulty in procuring witnesses, lack of proper facilities, and coercion of witnesses by the prosecution. Wurm also argues that the Nuremberg defendants seem to have been selected arbitrarily and that no independent court will verify the judgments handed down by the tribunal. He closes by maintaining that the trials as a whole “have a detrimental influence on the recovery of sound public opinion and prevent the return of confidence in law and justice. The love of our Lord Jesus Christ urges us to make every effort that the desperate, skeptical, and nihilistic humanity regains confidence in public order…”²³¹ Wurm’s large list of complaints is worth noting, since it emphasized the outrage he felt toward these proceedings. For Wurm, the dichotomy of resources and facilities only emphasized how much the German people were suffering in the wake of Hitler. In his opinion, this blatant disregard for the feelings and opinions of the German people would not only weaken their faith in the occupying forces, but create resentment and weaken the hold of law and justice. For many Germans it was difficult to look past their own desperate situation, and the trials only epitomized the two things they hated most about the Allied policies, denazification and an accusation of guilt.

For all the discussion about guilt and responsibility by Church leaders, one thing was often conspicuously absent: Jews. Most official Church statements failed to mention

²³⁰ EZAB. Bestand 2/233. pg. 2.
²³¹ EZAB. Bestand 2/233. pg. 3-7.
Jews or anti-Semitism. Even the *Stuttgart Declaration* made no mention of Jews or the people of Israel. Church leaders could not deny they had done little to stop the racial policies of the Third Reich, and evidence of the German Christians hatred of the Jewish race was abundant. There was also little desire to mention the subject in a public forum by most Church leaders. They were willing to renew the origins of Christianity in a Jewish Bible (thus repudiating the theology of the German Christians), and move away from Judaism as a problem of race (that was consistently linked to secular (Nazi) ideals). In spite of this, they were unwilling to give up their theological ideas firmly planted in anti-Jewish sentiments. Historian Matthew Hockenos describes the situation as “The EKD council and the church’s chancellery repeatedly brushed aside a serious reconsideration of the “Jewish Question” between 1945 and 1950 while national church leaders addressed what they said were more pressing concerns.”\(^{232}\) The reluctance to deal with the issue head on shows the depth of the engrained Protestant prejudices toward Jews.\(^{233}\) The reintegration of German Christians into the EKD\(^{234}\) also meant that although anti-Judaism was no longer in the limelight of the Church, it still was most likely an accepted ideology. It is hard to say if any prominent Church leaders can really be seen in a positive light in regard to Jewish Christians relations, as even Dietrich Bonhoeffer has received criticism from historians.\(^{235}\)

Most Church leaders dealt with a feeling of ambivalence toward Jews. They recognized that their prejudices had blinded them to the Nazi attacks against Jews,

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\(^{232}\) Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 136.


\(^{234}\) See chapter 2

specifically in terms of a Jewish “race” instead of a religion. They also wanted and needed to reaffirm the Jewish origin of the Gospel in response to the German Christian movement, which had attempted to remove the influence of Judaism on Christianity.  

However, many Pastors did not wish to change their theological views toward Jews. They maintained the Jews place as a cursed race for crucifying Christ, and still advocated conversion as their only true chance for their salvation. Those Church leaders that attempted to forge a new relationship with Jews, found themselves struggling with forming dialogue that respected the Jewish religion. Frequently used terms such as the Jewish “problem” or “question” were counterproductive to the goal of reconciliation.

One document that demonstrates the complexity and tentativeness of Church leaders toward Jews, and reaffirms their strong anti-Jewish ideas, was Karl Barth’s *The Jewish Problem and the Christian Answer.*

Barth’s discussion was actually a radio talk on December 13th, 1949, in which he addresses a multitude of themes in relation to Jews, including origin, physical and theological characteristics of Jews, and their divinely defined place in the world. Barth begins by questioning why Jews even still existed in the world, since in his view they had been disobedient to God, defied the test of time (as so many other civilizations and groups had faded), and had been hated and condemned by all manners of peoples. Barth remains mystified at their continued existence, but introduces an unusual philosophy in defining Jews. He says that “…and is the reason for the grudge we bear the Jew—that he is a mirror in which we see ourselves as we are, i.e. we see how bad we really are. The Jew

\[236\] See Chapter 1.
\[237\] See Brumlik, Micha. Pg. 172-175. Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 136-137.
\[238\] I should also make note that although Church leaders used similar terms as the Nazis, they meant something completely different. Church leaders were referring to the Jewish “question,” as a question to what should be done about anti-Semitism and the continued refusal of Jews to convert to Christianity.
pays for the fact that he is the elect of God.” Barth would elaborate on this idea in his attempt to define what a Jew is and his subsequent discussion of the Jews as a chosen people of God.

Barth’s mirror analogy is unique amongst Protestant leaders, and he uses it in his explanation in describing the origin of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish ideas. Interestingly enough, his very questions and conclusions designate him as an anti-Semite. He points out that no one really knows what is meant by the “Jewish race,” as Arabs, most of whom he perceived as enemies of the Jews, are also Semites. He argues that Hebrew is not even a language known by all Jews, and has been learned by all manners of scholars for the purpose of study. Barth also fails to find any true Jewish culture, as Jews speak different languages, have different customs, practice different forms of religion, and hold vastly different beliefs from one another. He says that what makes Jews the way they are is that they have no distinguishable characteristics. They have lost their national identity, and are thusly defined. He says that “No doubt once upon a time they had their own characteristics by reason of which they stood head and shoulders above all other races. They did not recognize them, but cast them away. Doubtless this took place when that Jew died on the Cross outside the gates of Jerusalem.”

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240 The questions Barth raises are very similar to the dialogue discussed by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his essay Anti-Semite and Jew (1944). Sartre comments on the definition of the Jewish race, both religious and racial, suggests, that the very same arguments Barth uses to attempt to evaluate the Jewish position, actually signify him as an anti-Semite because he fails to recognize them as anything but a Jew, regardless of their other affiliations. By treating the Jew as inferior, Barth marks himself as an elite and an anti-Semite. Sartre also makes note that Christians, particularly medieval Christians, have perpetuated anti-Semitism through its claims of a cursed race and for killing Christ. These claims have pushed anti-Semitism from a religious discrimination, to an economic one, since religious discrimination has segregated Jews to certain jobs, and ensured anti-Semitism endured beyond religious affiliation. See Sartre, Jean-Paul. Anti-Semite and Jew. New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1948. Pg. 27, 40, 53, 68, 81.
241 Barth, Karl. Pg. 197-198.
God, not by man. They are his “chosen people” as evident when he says they “stood head and shoulders above all other races.” However, Jews also have been stripped of this identity for their failure to realize they live only by the Grace of God. Without God’s Grace they are left scattered and homeless.

The contradictions here represent the kind of difficulties Church leaders had with Jews. On one hand Barth praises the Jews, calling them the chosen of God. As he puts it “There is no room for camouflage and ‘whitewashing.’ The sun shines down--not on the Egyptians and the Babylonians, not on the Philistines and Moabites, not on the Greeks and Romans, not on the English nor on the Swiss, but on the chosen people of Israel...” However, Barth is also quick to point out the failures of the Jews, particularly their failure to acknowledge Christ and their need for God’s Grace. He also tries to rationalize the hate civilizations have felt toward the Jews as jealousy for their status as the chosen people. He says that in truth, Jews simply mirror mankind’s shortcomings. When one attempts to define what a Jew is, he cannot, simply because Jews are both so unique and have spread out all over the world. Therefore the hated of Jews can only be because we only see the worst of mankind in the Jews. These ambiguous arguments made it extremely difficult for Protestant leaders to develop a relationship with Jews based on mutual respect for one another’s beliefs. While one can certainly see progress from the blatant anti-Semitic thought of the Church, the continued portrayal of Jews as “cursed” for failing to recognize Christ, and their continued “persecution” as some form of divine punishment showed that the Church was still deeply rooted in anti-Jewish theology. One also cannot overlook the fact that this was specifically Karl Barth, one of the most liberal minded (and influential) theologians of the time, who made these statements. That he has

242 Barth, Karl. Pg. 199.
such a strong anti-Jewish attitude is significant. Because many Lutherans were not willing to change their ideas and values, and Barth had a record of rethinking and reevaluating traditional interpretations, the fact that he is unable to break away from such blatant anti-Semitic ideology means it would be (and was) even more difficult for Lutherans to change their thinking.

Official statements from the Church, although differing in content, also wrestled with similar indecisiveness as Barth’s message. The *Message Concerning the Jewish Question* issued by the Council of Brethren of the Evangelical Church on April 8th 1948 demonstrated the Church’s failure to realize the magnitude of the Jewish situation. Contained within are contradictions and ironies that exposed the Church’s need for a more critical self-reflection. The document continues in the vain of Christian self-righteousness, maintaining that the only hope for Israel is “to be converted to him, who is their sole hope of salvation.”\(^{243}\) The document does make statements that admonish solving the Jewish “question” through race and blood, which showed some change in thinking, “As a Church we have failed to be the witness of salvation to Israel.”\(^{244}\) However, the dual nature of this document makes it clear that the Church’s journey toward an improved relationship with Jews was far off. Although it would be unreasonable to expect Church leaders to abandon their attempts to spread the Gospel, since that is such a basic facet of Christian duty, their failure to say so plainly and without an air of Christian superiority attenuated the effect of their directive.

\(^{243}\) *Message Concerning the Jewish Question*. Originally translation in the WCC publication *the Relationship of the Church to the Jewish People: Collection of Statements by the World Council of Churches and Representative Bodies of Its Member Churches*. (Geneva, 1964), 48-52. Found in Hckenos appendix 7

\(^{244}\) *Message Concerning the Jewish Question*
Even more surprising is the irony that encompassed the Church’s actions toward Jewish converts. Despite their persistent claim that Jews must convert to achieve salvation, Jewish converts were treated with disdain or indifference by most prominent Church clergy. Indeed, converts from Judaism had experienced one kind of additional sorrow than that of other concentration camp victims. Not only were they discriminated against for their Jewishness, they also faced discrimination from the Protestants with whom they identified. Actually, mostly missionaries and aid-workers took up the true fight against anti-Judaism/Semitism. This was primarily because they were the ones who dealt with actual Jews on a common basis and as a result, were much more in tune with the proper etiquette in dealing with Jews and understanding their needs and feelings. Consequently missionaries and aid-workers often chastised the decisions of upper Church management in regards to Jews and Jewish-Christians.²⁴⁵

Fortunately, just two years after the *Message Concerning the Jewish Question*, another document was released by the Synod of the EKD in Berlin-Weissensee²⁴⁶ that was much more thought-out. The document, entitled *Statement on the Jewish Question*, was more successful for a number of reasons. For one, Otto Dibelius took over Bishop Wurm as the chairman of the EKD council in 1949, and seemed to be more willing to take an active role in repairing the damage caused by anti-Semitism in the Church. The council also received input from Catholics and Jews, which undoubtedly influenced the Synod’s document. Actually, the overall goal of the council was not to address the Jewish “question,” but rather to promote peace through Europe. This reason also accounted for the presence of Catholics and Jews in the discussion. The council believed without a

²⁴⁵ Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 139.
²⁴⁶ A district that traditionally has a high Jewish population in the Soviet Occupation Zone after 1945.
significant statement about Jews, any attempts to promote peace would be lacking credibility.\textsuperscript{247} This of course questions the sincerity of the declaration, because of its ulterior political motivations. However, the document as a whole was valid. Heinrich Vogel, a friend of Karl Barth’s and professor of theology in Berlin, pushed for a new document that concretely admitted guilt in relationship to the Jews. He would be joined by a number of other pastors who were active on their front, including Theodor Dipper, and Joachim Backmann. Martin Niemöller also would join the Synod,\textsuperscript{248} and although he had often been criticized for not taking a more active role in repairing Jewish Christian relations,\textsuperscript{249} he seemed eager to make amends.

The document is short but effective, making just eight statements. The document does three things that show an insight lacking in the former \textit{Message Concerning the Jewish Question}. Present once again are admissions of remorse and guilt, however, this time the document does not maintain that Jews must convert to Christianity, which is evident in the second statement “We believe God’s promise to be valid for his Chosen People even after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.” This softening of the stoic theology of the past is vital to forming a working relationship between Christians and Jews. This showed the Synod realized it must learn to view Jews as equals as opposed to those forced to bear God’s punishment. Also crucial was a statement which reaffirmed the value of Jewish Christians. But most importantly in this document was the statement that said “We ask the Christian congregation to protect Jewish graveyards within their areas if

\textsuperscript{247} Brumlik, Micha. Pg. 175.
\textsuperscript{248} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 155-159.
\textsuperscript{249} Hockenos, Matthew. Pg. 137.
they are unprotected.” This final point was something concrete that the Church can do to help foster peace between the two religions. It also showed an understanding of Jewish wants and needs, since remembrance became such a critical aspect of Jewish reconciliation with the Holocaust. While the document is blemished by political motivations, it certainly had some credibility. Since the document was issued by some of the most diligent pastors in terms of combating anti-Judaism, and it received input from both Catholics and Jews, it promoted an honest desire to improve relations. Since the overall goal of the council was to promote peace through Europe, the council obviously saw the value of setting an example themselves. By working with Jews and Catholics, Protestant leaders actively participated in the very thing they were trying to sponsor. Although it took the Protestant Church five years of postwar reflection to finally reach this point, it does show progression. Of course it was not as though this statement marked an end to anti-Semitism within the Church. However, it did provide a foundation for future leaders to build upon.

The challenge of guilt the Protestant Church faced was indeed mountainous. It was not something that could be easily explained or brushed aside, nor could it be solved with a simple change in Church policy. In 1945, it seemed this task was too much for most Church members. The pain and loss of war coupled with the practical challenges and tribulations of a devastated nation made facing guilt a tall order for a fragmented Church and its beleaguered parishes. Most Church leaders found it easier to think of the past in the way they wished it to be. It was easier for Confessing Church leaders to say

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they spoke up loudly against Nazism and in the defense of Jews, when in fact all they had
done was attempt to fight back against state encroachment and the German Christian
movement. Other than pastors like Martin Niemöller and Hermann Diem, few had the
courage to enter in a discussion about true personal responsibility. Further compounding
Church leader’s decisions not to engage in such discussions were the extremely
unpopular Allied policies of denazification and the accusation of collective guilt. Fallout
from the *Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt* would just reinforce some Church leader’s
reluctance to enter into such messages of self-analysis. Church leaders were primarily
concerned with providing for their parishes, and as such leaders like Bishop Wurm felt he
spoke on behalf of his Congregation when he was quick to point out the Allies
hypocrisies and injustices in things like his letter to General Clay and his letter *To the
Christians of England*. Nonetheless, those that were more forthcoming about their failure
to act more decisively would have the longer lasting impact, as the discussion of guilt
would continue into the next generation. The Church’s initial silence about Jews would
reflect their failure to let go of old prejudices and show how deep the taint of anti-
Semitism had run through the Protestant clergy. When the Church did finally begin to
discuss its relationship with Jews the first attempts were clumsy and counterproductive.
Unflattering language and ambiguous theology in accompaniment with admissions of
guilt make it difficult to view the Church as anything but part of the problem. Not until
1950 do we start to see an evolution into the kinds of actions that could truly begin to
forge a new relationship with Jews.
Conclusion

One thing I hope to have made clear throughout this thesis is that the efforts of reformers, in conjunction with a larger change to the political landscape of Germany, prevented the Church from returning to its prewar state. Pastors like Martin Niemöller actively pursued political activism, which prevented the Church from retreating back into a shell of political indifference. Niemöller’s role in antiwar protests and his candid declarations of guilt and personal responsibility may have created a popular backlash at the time, but in the long run, his policies won out over the ambiguous arguments made by Hans Asmussen, Theophil Wurm, and Otto Dibelius. Aside from the inclusion of a Christian education in the “Basic Law” of the FRG, it is unclear how effective the policy of re-Christianization advocated by Bishop Wurm really was, whereas the community outreach and political awareness preached by Niemöller and Karl Barth flourished.

Evidence of Niemöller and Barth’s success in creating a Protestant community active in the political sphere is abundant. Protestant academies, which began meeting in the late 1940’s, boasted over 51,000 members in 1961. These members were often doctors, teachers, lawyers, and journalists who met to discuss social topics and political issues.\textsuperscript{251} The Church itself also continued to present material the interacted with larger political arguments. In 1965, the Church released a document entitled “Vertriebenendenkschrift,” (Position Paper concerning the Refugees from the East). This was easily one of the Church’s most engaging and divisive documents. Over 250,000 copies were printed, and the essay was frequently discussed and mentioned by groups.

outside of the Church. Niemöller’s pacifist movement also continued throughout the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Protestants in the FRG generally protested the war in Vietnam, the continued arms race, and nuclear weapons.

Hans Iwand also had a lasting influence in his calls for reunification and peace amongst Germans. German Protestants in both the East and the West participated in peaceful rallies for unification. The Protestant *Kirchentag* held in the city of Leipzig in July, 1954 saw 650,000 Protestants ban together to sing hymns and worship in hope of German reunification. Some members of the EKD displayed similar sentiments in the 1960s, when Church leaders argued over which aspects of the FRG’s “Ostpolitik” best served reunification.

There is also evidence that Karl Barth’s effort to limit “Western” influence was also successful. In the 1960s, theologian Dorothee Sölle renewed the discussion of “religious socialism,” which opened a dialogue between Christianity and Marxism. In addition, groups like the Evangelische Studentengemeinde (ESG), or Protestant student association, drew significant influence Marx in the late 1960s. In the 1970s and ‘80s, the ESG rediscovered Barth’s own work, and connected it to their dialogue of social implications in the context of Christian faith.

Although reformers efforts created a new political awareness in the Church, the positions of traditional Lutherans did not simply evaporate. The EKD as a whole

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254 Ziemann, Benjamin. Pg. 13. Also note, Leipzig located in the GDR.
255 Cooper, Alice Holmes. Pg. 164. “Ostpolitik” was the name for the FRG’s foreign policy toward Soviet controlled countries in the east.
256 Cooper, Alice Holmes. Pg. 166.
257 See Chapters II and III.
abstained from discussions on rearmament in the 1950’s. This silent acquiescence was eerily similar to the Nazi period. Historian Alice Holmes Cooper notes that “With these statements, [The Church’s decision not to take an official position on rearmament] the EKD implicitly confirmed the traditional, Lutheran two-realms [or Two Kingdoms] doctrine of the church’s limited political involvement and in effect supported Adenauer’s rearmament policy by not opposing it.”258 This continued reluctance to get involved in political affairs proved that Luther’s Two Kingdoms was still supported by a significant portion of the clergy.

The more challenging problems Protestant Church leaders dealt with from 1945-1950 were not as easily solved. Issues of guilt and repentance continued in the decades to follow, as they represented problems that could not be solved with a simple change in mindset or applying a new policy. Jewish relations were an even greater problem, perhaps because even the great reformers of the political arena (Niemöller and Barth), either displayed reluctance to tackle the issue head on, or still held ideas that were blatantly anti-Semitic.259 In many ways neither Barth nor Niemöller were reformers in respect to the Jewish “question.” Few Church leaders engaged in open discussions about the past and guilt, and those that did (Niemöller, Diem), failed to convince the general population to do the same. The German population as a whole struggled to come to terms with the past in the decades to follow. Philosophers like Theodor Adorno, and Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich both took up these issues in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Overall, Church leaders consistently grappled with the idea of “going astray.” While many denied that they had done anything wrong in the first place and shifted blame to others, important members like Martin Niemöller confronted this idea head on. He, as well as other

258 Cooper, Alice Holmes. Pg. 45-50.
259 Chapter IV.
reformers, maintained that the Church had in fact “gone astray,” and campaigned vigorously to change the Church’s political awareness and perceptions of guilt.
Secondary Sources


**Primary Sources**


Other Primary documents


Archival Sources