

Letter to the American Church- Chapter 1-6

Introduction- The German Church was silent in the 1930s.

America is only exceptional *when* it acknowledges what Jesus did on Calvary. Tocqueville noted that in Early America the churches helped to encourage, create, sustain the culture of liberty.

God has chosen the US to hold the torch of liberty around the world- we need to shine for ourself and others- the Church is central to this. Unless we lean on God and acknowledge Him- we will fail. It is the Church's responsibility in America to stand against evil.

Globalist forces are at war with God- anti-nationalism. Are we the frog in the pot with a gradual loss of our freedom and liberty?

Atheistic Marxist ideology - CRT- pretends to champion the underdog- but Stalin, Hitler, Mao all butchered millions fighting "for the people".

We cannot be apolitical- Marxists persuade churches to abandon the Gospel- as "political"- this is a deceptive, political lie- Germany still lives with its shame. We need to learn from them.

Chapter 1-What Is The Church?

Bonhoeffer asked in *Sanctorum Communio*- What is the Church? The Church is the people of God - living out their faith **within all spheres of life** to bless society. If we fail to do this, we fault be the Church.

Problem today- the Church has receded from public life- not blessing it- it has shrunk back into its "proper religious sphere" to avoid culture wars. GOD and TRUTH cannot be chased into an arbitrary religious corner....this is preposterous!

Religious liberty=freedom to worship privately with a guaranteed free exercise thereof...it is un-American to shrink back and to voluntarily give up our rights! We must speak against Communism and companies who do business with countries who abuse human rights. It is unbiblical- and unconstitutional to act as if God is not applicable beyond the Churches- lest we IMPOSE our views on the rest of the culture. NO good comes from silence.

Wilberforce- was also told to keep his views private- he knew "religious" views were only "religious" to those who were pro-slavery due to profits. It was God's will that he spoke out!

Bonhoeffer was told not to be "political"- he called on Church leaders to speak for the Jews- a lonely path....

Chuck Colson frequently quoted Abraham Kuyper- "There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, Who is sovereign, does not cry, 'Mine' !"

What happened to start this decline? Some major aspects:

- 1- Mistaken views of Jefferson's "Wall of Separation" between Church and State
- 2-1954- LBJ - amendment that churches could not endorse an candidate-re tax exemption
- 3- 1960s- Supreme Court took prayer out of Public Schools- imposed secular religion instead
- 4-1973- "right to abortion" **Sadly, Churches let these issues be uncontested-** gradually faith was "privatized" in the public square.

18th C- Pastors and pulpits once spoke against King George III- and helped gain freedom.
19th C- Churches spoke against slavery.
20th C- Churches spoke against Jim Crow Laws.

In reality- Pastors are allowed to say what God and their conscious alone determines.

Why submission today? Do they forget that God calls them to their post-God fills their churches- do they fear being cancelled like corporations- Are Americans so blessed that they are too comfortable/soft? Have we lost our First Love? Repent before it is too late!! (pp 9/10)

American Churches shrink back “for the sake of the Gospel”- avoid taking sides in cultural wars- not to appear “political” with a particular party or candidate. **WHO** decided that being political means we are not Gospel oriented? Tim Keller’s “Third Way” philosophy has *serious* limitations - while staying “above the fray”. Should we be afraid of man or God?????

Why are CRT and Transgender Queer Theory welcome in so many churches- Fear? Cultural Marxism is atheistic- opposed to the God they *claim* to serve- It is at war with God!

Sex Ed curriculum confuses and then leads to mutilation of our children- with our tax dollars- why are Churches not informing their flocks and standing up against and fighting this?

Covid 19 was a test- some Churches were submissive- our fidelity is to God and **no other**. Many pastors were silent- will they now speak out and *repent*?

Chapter 2- Does God Ask Us To See The Future?

It is extremely important- and we **are expected** to study the past, i.e. the German Church in the 1930s, or else fail similarly. We have the benefit of their history to study- they did not have this advantage. We have **no excuse**. Christians are expected to “see the future” by heeding those who see it- prophets like Bonhoeffer- today and in the past.

Romans 3: 23-24- We all have need for a Savior as we are all sinners, not just the German Church.

There is still time to act- and **we can CHANGE the future**.

Chapter 3-Unless You Repent

To celebrate Reformation Day, Bonhoeffer, age 26, was asked to give a sermon to the “elite” at Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, a magnificent edifice built by Kaiser Wilhelm in the 1890s in Berlin. He remembered the fiery church of Luther and knew the German churches had become too comfortable, and also put German pride ahead of God. A new national socialism was emerging, a wicked perversion of healthy nationalism, the sworn enemy of Christ. He wanted to deliver a sermon to wake them up instead! He felt it was no longer “viable” to celebrate this very solemn day in a carnal church. God would **not** care if you properly celebrated this day with “pomp”, instead He would ask if you heard and kept His Word.

“Bonhoeffer understood that if everyone who loved Germany was automatically thought of as a Lutheran Christian, almost as a birthright- then the heart of the Christian faith had become meaningless- and so it made a mockery both of Luther’s profound devotion to Christ- and to the otherworldly devotion that true faith in Christ demands of us.” (p.24)

The German Church was asleep and he had to forcibly awaken them- by speaking out. If his warnings as a prophet went unheeded, judgement would fall. It was time to repent before it was too late. He valiantly reminded them of the Church of Ephesus and how God warned them He would remove their blessings and protection if they continued down their path.(He later wrote a book *The Cost Of Discipleship* in 1937 with a similar message.)

The result was ...*indifference and no repentance*. Luther had feared the flames of Hell more than whatever people threatened him with on earth. The Church in the 1930s sadly feared losing their respectable positions in society and did not get involved.

In January of 1942, German officials gathered to solve “the Jewish Question”. They agreed to take dwindling funding away from winning the war against the Allies and divert them to killing as many innocent Jews as possible....

Eleven years later after his sermon, the beautiful KW Church laid in ruins due to an English RAF bombing in November of 1943- and the world was at war and millions had already died....

Chapter 4- The Church and The Jewish Question

Earlier in 1933, three months after Bonhoeffer’s fiery, prophetic sermon, Hitler was made Chancellor- he wanted to change everything in German life- and he did so at lightning speed. He presented himself as “The Leader” with absolute power.

Bonhoeffer spoke publicly on Hitler’s concept of the leadership principle “Führerprinzip”. — and compared it to the true servant leadership in the Bible. One cannot idolize oneself as a messianic figure or else we become a “misleader.” He also stressed that we must not be sucked along with the mainstream of popular thinking- as the broad road leads to destruction.He found his broadcasts began to be cut off and “cancelled” ...

Bonhoeffer battled Church leaders who **could not see the urgency**- they simply clung to the safety of NO CHANGE- instead of getting involved and trusting God. He stressed that things that worked decades ago no longer worked- it was no longer enough to just preach the Gospel and teach the Bible- we must also acknowledge what evil is happening today- and help lead our flocks to stand up against it. Barren churches do not acknowledge issues- remember the cursed fig tree?The German Church simply COULD NOT submit to the Nazi Leadership. Many Church leaders failed to see this.

Coincidentally (??)4 weeks into power....The “Reichstag Fire” in the Parliament building gave Hitler the excuse to call an emergency decree *without* the approval of the German Parliament.The coordinated Media blamed the Communists- but many felt it could have been the Nazis’ plan to demonize their enemies. (Sounds familiar??? Perhaps 9/11- January 6- George Floyd?)

April 7, 1933 Hitler signed the Restoration Act- for the “pure German state”- it was then declared illegal by the Aryan Paragraph for anyone of Jewish blood to hold government jobs. It later spread to professions like doctors and lawyers etc. Eventually, pastors with Jewish blood were barred from serving...Would the German Church change its doctrine to submit to this racial ideology???

Jesus was a Jew. His 12 disciples were Jews. The majority of the German Church still looked the other way- and wished to “just get along” and not be “troublemakers”.....Thankfully, the

Emergency Pastors League heroically did not- and asked Bonhoeffer to put into writing what he thought the Church was obliged to do under these new, hostile changes in circumstances. In April of 1933 he presented the 3 following points in *The Church and the Jewish Question*:

- 1- The Church was the conscience of the nation- it must call the state to account and loudly object.
- 2- The Church was obligated to help any victims of the state- namely the Jews.
- 3- If the state refused to change course- and persecuted the Jews- Christians must take action- protest verbally- and help the victims. The Church must be politically active “to shove a stick in the spokes of the state machine.”

Many pastors were shocked and walked out of his presentation-. Bonhoeffer felt that all real Christians had an obligation to get political- be bold- even though it could be dangerous. (Perhaps he may have stressed only from Roman’s 13- 7 “ Pay....respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”- only real servant leaders?....) Romans 13 could no longer be used as the Church ’s “default mode” to stay out of the fray. Christians need to be “shrewd as serpents”, wise and alert to changing circumstances. The evil of today is different than the evil of yesterday. We need to read the signs of the times.

Chapter 5- 12,000 Pastors

As the War went on, the German Church divided:

- 1) The **pro-Nazi Deutsche Christians** wanted to help Hitler form the National Reich Church. The church was to be subservient to Hitler and would be a counterfeit church.
- 2) The **Bekennende Kirche- the “Confessing Church”** all signed the **Barmen Declaration** in 1934- stating the German state must not co-opt the Church- and wanted a clear cut separation of Church and state. They submitted only to God.

Most of the 18,000 pastors chose not to sign the declaration and stayed on the sidelines. Only 1/3 heroic pastors signed, and 1/3 of pastors supported Hitler’s church.

12,000 chose “not to be political”- their silence eventually doomed the church and the country. “All will be well”, or they just waited for God’s judgement on evil.... In the meantime, 700 of the heroes were arrested- but no one spoke out. Did they later regret? Glad they wisely remained silent?? Many naively never imagined the extent of evil that would be unleashed- while they “virtue signaled” with their Nazi flags and banners- just staying in their “religious sphere”.

While the greater majority dithered in silence- Hitler’s power grew. He held a death grip on their nation for 12 years- midway through establishing death camps as the “Final Solution”- starting in 1942 with the Wannsee Conference. Unimagined evil expanded with each year of power.

The Church’s concessions, ignorance, silence, inaction, theological confusion, all helped evil gain a foothold and even lended Hitler a hand.....

The Barmen Declaration inspired **Chuck Colson** and others to later draft the **Manhattan Declaration in 2009**. It was a joint statement from Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox..

Some points:

- 1) The state cannot force medical personnel to perform abortions.
- 2) The state cannot violate religious liberty .
- 3) The state cannot force anyone to violate their Biblical views on marriage /man and woman.

Like with MLKing's *Letter for the Birmingham Jail*-if the state violated these and similar points, we were obliged to be civil disobedient.

Very surprisingly to Colson and the other authors, many well known pastors did not sign this. In researching their responses, it appeared that it was related to an "ecumenical" issue???

Perhaps all three groups could have written their own and submitted separately? It is a very complicated issue, well worth FAR more research by all of us!

Please look up The Barmen Declaration and the Manhattan Declaration for deeper insight.

Chapter 6- The Spiral of Silence

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. God will not hold us guiltless."

INACTION IS PARTICIPATION!!

The theory of the **Spiral of Silence** was created in the 1970s by a former Hitler supporter, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who studied the perplexing silence during the 1930s:

"When people fail to speak, the price of speaking rises. As the price rises to speak, still fewer speak out. Eventually, there is silence." Cowardice begets cowardice.

Those who speak out make it easier for others to speak out. Courage begets courage!

Are we willing pay the price for speaking or acting? "Does not our fear of anything but God Himself make of God a liar?"

Some genuine theological objections and misunderstandings can also add to their choice to be silent. Here are four major misunderstandings:

- 1) Not fully understanding the word "faith" and confusing it with what Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace"- something that can be obtained without any personal effort or cost.
- 2) The "idol of evangelism"- thinking that the only real role of the Church is evangelism- so one must not detract from that *singular* goal.
- 3) Believing the false commandment- " Be ye not political"- incorrect views of the Church's proper relationship to the state- as if it is "off limits'....
- 4) Having the pietistic view that our faith is lived out principally avoiding sin- and that *our* virtue and salvation are #1- and are above all other matters.

These four misunderstandings can paralyze believers and pastors from living or acting freely under God's grace.