

Der Wortlaut der Protestschrift der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche an Reichkanzler Hitler

Wir veröffentlichen im folgenden die bedeutende Denkschrift der Vorläufigen Leitung der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche, die — wie unsere Leser bereits wissen — kürzlich dem Reichkanzler Hitler durch Staatssekretär Weisner zugestellt worden ist, im vollen Wortlaut, da sie die derzeitige Lage der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland und das Verhältnis des evangelischen Christentums zum Nationalsozialismus in klarer und umfassender Form zur Darstellung bringt. Die Sperrungen im Text stammen von uns. Die Redaktion.

„Die Deutsche Evangelische Kirche, vertreten durch die geistlichen Mitglieder ihrer Vorläufigen Leitung und den dieser zur Seite stehenden Rat, embletiert dem Führer und Reichkanzler ehrerbietig Glück.“

Die Deutsche Evangelische Kirche ist mit dem Führer und seinen Mitarbeitern eng verbunden durch die Fürbitte, die sie öffentlich wie in der Stille für Volk, Staat und Regierung übt. Darum hat die Vorläufige Leitung der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche es auf sich nehmen dürfen, die Sorgen und Befürchtungen, die viele Christen in Gemeinden, Bruderräten und Kirchenleitungen im Blick auf die Zukunft des evangelischen Glaubens und der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland bewegen und die sie lange und ernstlich durchdacht hat, in dem vorliegenden Schreiben zum Ausdruck zu bringen.

Sie übergibt dieses Schreiben im Gehorsam gegen ihren göttlichen Auftrag, vor jedermann — auch vor den Herren und Gebiethern der Völker — unangekündigt Sein Wort zu sagen und Sein Gebot zu bezeugen. Sie vertraut darauf, daß Gott ihr selbst die Weisheit schenkt, ihren Auftrag so klar und eindeutig auszuführen, daß dabei ihre Sorge um das christliche Gewissen und ihre Liebe zum deutschen Volk in gleicher Weise unmissverständlich erkennbar werden.

Wir wissen uns jedenfalls bei unseren Darlegungen, wie unsere Amtsvorgänger in ihrem leider ohne spürbare Wirkung gebliebenen Schreiben vom 11. April 1935 (in Anmerkung beigefügt), nur von der einen Pflicht getrieben, den leidenden, verwirrten und gefährdeten Gliedern der evangelischen Kirche durch ihr Wort und ihre Fürsprache zu helfen. Es liegt uns alles daran, daß die Reichregierung aus ihren Ausführungen diese aus der Sorge um die der Kirche anvertrauten Seelen sprechende Stimme klar und deutlich vernehme.

Der Herr der Kirche sagt: „Was hülfte es dem Menschen, so er die ganze Welt gewönne und nähme doch Schaden an seiner Seele? Oder was kann der Mensch geben, damit er seine Seele wieder löse?“ Dieses Wort zeigt die Größe und den Ernst des Dienstes, zu dem die Kirche von Gott gerufen ist. Es erinnert zugleich an die Grenzen, die allen irdischen Mächten und ihrem Streben gesetzt sind. Es weist endlich auf die Gefahr hin, der immer wieder ungläubige Menschen, darunter auch Glieder der Kirche, zu erliegen drohen.

1. Gefahr der Entchristlichung.

Die Vorläufige Leitung weiß es zu würdigen, was es im Jahre 1933 und späterhin bedeutet hat, daß die Träger der nationalsozialistischen Revolution nachdrücklich erklären konnten: „Wir haben mit unserem Sieg über den Bolschewismus zugleich den Feind überwunden, der auch das Christentum und die christlichen Kirchen bekämpfte und zu zerstören drohte.“

Wir erleben aber, daß der Kampf gegen die christliche Kirche, wie nie seit 1918, im Deutschen Volke wirksam und lebendig ist.

Keine Macht der Welt, die sie auch heiße, vermag die Kirche Gottes gegen Seinen Willen zu zerstören oder zu schütten; das ist Gottes Sache. Die Kirche aber hat sich der angebotenen Gewissens ihrer Glieder anzunehmen.

Durch die Not und Bewirrung des heutigen Glaubenskampfes werden viele getaupte Christen mit zeitlichem und ewigem Unheil bedroht. Wenn sogar hohe Stellen in Staat und Partei den Christenglauben öffentlich angreifen (Anm. u. a. Rede Lens), dann werden der Kirche und ihrer Botschaft an sich schon entfremdete Kirchenglieder dadurch immer mehr in ihren Unglauben vertritt, Wandende und Unsihere vollends unsicher gemacht und zum Abfall getrieben. Ja, es besteht ernsthafte Gefahr, daß die evangelische Jugend sich hindern läßt, zu dem zu kommen, der der alleinige Heiland auch deutscher Knaben und Mädchen ist. Dieser Gefährdung der Glieder der Kirche muß eine verantwortungsbewußte Kirchenleitung wehren.

Zu solcher Abwehr gehört die klare Frage an den Führer und Reichkanzler, ob der Versuch, das deutsche Volk zu entchristlichen, durch weiteres Mitwirken verantwortlicher Staatsmänner oder auch nur durch Tauschen und Gewährenlassen zum offiziellen Kurs der Regierung werden soll.

2. „Positives Christentum.“

Wir vertrauen, daß die Reichregierung, um die Zulassung des Glaubensbundes in Deutschland zu vermeiden, das Wort der evangelischen Kirche hören wird. Als die N. S. D. A. P. in ihrem Programm erklärte, daß sie auf dem Boden eines „positiven Christentums“ stehe, hat die gesamte kirchliche Bevölkerung das dahin verstehen müssen und auch verstehen sollen, daß im Dritten Reich der christliche Glaube gemäß den Bekenntnissen und der Predigt der Kirche Freiheit und Schutz, ja Hilfe und Förderung erfahren sollte.

Später aber ist es dahin gekommen, daß maßgebende Persönlichkeiten des Staates und der Partei das Wort „positives Christentum“ willkürlich ausgelegt haben.

Bald gab der Herr Reichsminister für Propaganda und Volksaufklärung aus positives Christentum aus, was lediglich humanitäre Leistung ist, und verband mit dieser Auslegung unter Umständen einen Angriff auf die christlichen Kirchen und ihre angeblich mangelhaften Leistungen auf dem Gebiet der christlichen Liebestätigkeit, das ihnen doch der Staat selbst seit 1933 durch seine Verbote weitestgehend eingegrenzt hatte (Anm. Reden von Goebbels zum Winterhilfswerk u. a.). „Wären die Kirchen von wahren christlichem Geist befeuert, dann hätten sie es niemals dem Staat überlassen, in diesem Winter den Armen über Hunger und Frost hinwegzuhelfen... Ich glaube, Christus selbst würde in unserem Tun mehr von seiner Lehre entboden als in diesen theologischen Haarpalastereien... Das Volk würde vielleicht eher verstehen, wenn die Kirche sich mit dem wahren Christentum beschäftigte...“; bald verständete der Herr Reichsschulungsleiter Rosenberg seine Kritik des Blutes als positives Christentum, und Parteistellen diffamierten nach seinem Vorbild das bekenntnistreue und offenbarungsgläubige Christentum als negativ (Anm. Kolnberg: „Wir erkennen heute, daß die zentralen Höchstwerte der römischen und der protestantischen Kirche als negatives Christentum unserer Seele nicht entsprechen, daß sie den organischen Kräften der nordisch-raffisch gestimmten Völker im Wege stehen, ihnen Weg zu machen haben, sich neu im Sinne eines germanischen Christentums umwerten lassen müssen“). Schreiben der

It presents this letter in obedience to its divine mission to speak His Word without fear to every man—including to the lords and masters of the nations—and to attest to His Commandment. It trusts that God Himself gives it the wisdom to carry out its mission so clearly and unambiguously that its concern for the Christian conscience and its love for the German nation are equally and unmistakably recognizable.

Be that as it may, we are motivated in our statements, as were our predecessors in office in their letter dated April 11, 1935 (enclosed as appendix), which unfortunately has had no perceptible effect, solely by the one duty of helping the suffering, confused, and threatened members of the Evangelical Church through its words and its advocacy. We are solely concerned that the Reich government should clearly hear and understand through its statements this voice speaking out of concern for the souls entrusted to the Church.

The Lord of the Church says: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” These words show the great and earnest nature of the service to which the Church is appointed by God. They recall as well the boundaries set to all earthly powers and their striving. They refer, finally, to the danger to which countless people, including members of the Church, threaten to succumb time and time again.

1. Danger of De-Christianization

The Provisional Executive appreciates the import, in 1933 and subsequently, of the protagonists of the National Socialist revolution being able to declare with emphasis: “With our victory over Bolshevism we have simultaneously overcome the enemy that also fought and threatened to destroy Christianity and the Christian Churches.”

We are experiencing, however, that the fight against the Christian Church is as alive and well in the German nation as never before since 1918.

No power in the world, no matter what its name, can possibly destroy or shield God's Church against His will; that is the task of God. The Church, however, has to attend to the disputed consciences of its members.

Through the distress and confusion of the present struggle against religion, many baptized Christians are threatened by temporal and eternal damnation. If even those with high positions in the state and the party publicly attack the Christian faith (see Ley's speech, among others), then members of the Church already alienated from the Church and its teachings will become increasingly entrapped in their lack of faith, while those who are wavering and unsure will be made

The Wording of the German Evangelical Church's Protest Letter to Reich Chancellor Hitler

We are publishing below the important memorandum by the Provisional Executive of the German Evangelical Church, which—as our readers are aware—was recently forwarded to Reich Chancellor Hitler through Undersecretary of State Meißner, in its full wording, because it presents the current situation of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the relationship of Evangelical Christianity to National Socialism in a clear and comprehensive form. The spaced passages in the text are our own. The Editors.

“The German Evangelical Church, represented by the clerical members of its Provisional Executive and the Council assisting them, presents its respectful compliments to the Führer and Reich Chancellor.

The German Evangelical Church is closely linked to the Führer and his advisors through the intercession it practices publicly and in silence for the people, state, and government. For this reason, the Provisional Executive of the German Evangelical Church in conjunction with the Council of the German Evangelical Church has taken up its responsibility to express in this letter the concerns and fears which many Christians in congregations, brethren councils, and church boards feel with regard to the future of the Evangelical faith and the Evangelical Church in Germany, which it has considered long and earnestly.

fully uncertain and driven to apostasy. Indeed, there is a serious threat that the Evangelical youth is allowing itself to be prevented from coming to Him who is the sole savior of all German boys and girls. A responsible Church executive must oppose this threat to the members of the Church.

Such an opposition includes the clear question to the Führer and Reich Chancellor as to whether the attempt to de-Christianize the German people, through further acts of high-ranking statesmen or simply through looking on and taking no action, is to become official government policy.

2. "Positive Christianity"

We trust that the Reich government will heed the words of the Evangelical Church in order to avoid the escalation of the struggle against religion in Germany. When the N.S.D.A.P. declared in its manifesto that it operated on the basis of a "positive Christianity," the entire religious population had to and was intended to understand this as meaning that the Christian faith in accordance with the confessions and the preaching of the Church was to be given freedom and protection, indeed aid and support, in the Third Reich.

Later, however, it transpired that significant figures in the state and the party interpreted the term "positive Christianity" as they saw fit.

The Reich Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment was soon presenting merely humanitarian acts as positive Christianity, and in some cases combining this interpretation with an attack on the Christian Churches and their allegedly insufficient work in the field of Christian charity, which the state itself had significantly restricted them from through its bans in effect since 1933 (see Goebbels's speech on the Winter Relief campaign, among others: "Were the Churches inspired by true Christian spirit, they would never have left it up to the state to help the poor through hunger and frost this winter ... I believe Christ himself would discover more of his teachings in our deeds than in this theological hair-splitting ... The people would perhaps understand better if the Church concerned itself with true Christianity ..."). Soon Reich Ideological Training Leader Rosenberg proclaimed his mysticism of the blood positive Christianity, and party offices began following his example by vilifying confessional and revelatory Christianity as negative (see Rosenberg: "We recognize today that the highest central values of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches are negative Christianity and do not correspond to our souls, that they are in the way of the organic forces of the peoples of the Nordic race, must make room for them, must be revalued anew in the sense of a Germanic Christianity." Letter from S.A. Brigade 11 to the Provisional Executive: "... No positive Christian will be dismissed from the S.A., only those

negative Christians who are in contradiction of National Socialism through their adherence to medieval dogma ... The negative Christian fights for the Church, to the detriment of the people, for its dogma and for the preservation of priestly lies and thereby for the devil ... being an S.A. man and belonging to the confessional front is a contradiction in terms ... Though we positive Christians do not think so poorly of our fellow men, we nevertheless protect ourselves against infiltration by vigilantes, spies, and demoralizing elements ..."). Under the guise of positive Christianity, key concepts of the Christian faith (faith, love, eternity, prayer, resurrection) have been divested of their revelatory content and reinterpreted in purely inner-worldly, psychological terms through the words of yet other representatives of the Reich government, even in statements by Reich Ecclesiastical Minister Kerrl (see Göring, among others: "We have declared to the Church that we operate on the basis of positive Christianity. Through our zeal of faith, our strength of faith, we have shown the Church what faith really means." Kerrl: "This [i.e., the confession to positive Christianity] has nothing to do with dogma, but rather is independent faith and is that love in the form of practical deeds which bids us to say: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' The essence of National Socialism is faith, its deed is love, and National Socialist positive Christianity is brotherly love.").

The damage of such statements is all the greater in that the Church has never been given the opportunity to refute, with the same range of audience, the misinterpretations of the Christian faith by high offices.

3. Destruction of Ecclesiastical Order

The methods of the de-Christianization of the German people become comprehensible in their context if one

recalls the words of Reich Ideological Training Leader Rosenberg that one should "not spare the enemy, but overcome it intellectually, allow its organization to wither, and render it politically impotent" (*Myth*, p. 636) in the struggle for a German faith. The National Socialists have acted according to this principle.

Officially, any interference in the inner structures and religious life of the Evangelical Church is denied (see Göring's speeches; Kerrl: "If confusions have arisen within the Evangelical Church over the past two years, they have been caused at the most by individuals. Never by the party as such, never by the state as such." Goebbels: "If we preach the unity of the Protestant Church, that is because we consider it impossible that 28 Regional Churches continue to exist at a time when the whole Reich is becoming unified. We do not wish to exert any dogma. Nor do we interfere in the interpretation of the gospel ... In the interpretation of the gospel, God's

command may be held higher than the command of human authority. In the interpretation of practical political matters, we consider ourselves the instrument of God." Hitler: "The party neither previously had nor now has the intention of leading any struggle against Christianity in Germany. It has attempted, on the contrary, to create a large Evangelical Reich Church by consolidating impossible Protestant Regional Churches, without interfering in confessional issues in the slightest" [Party conference, 9.11.35].)

In actual fact, however, one interference after another has been imposed on the Church since the forced elections of July 1933 to this day.

(N.B. The main interferences: 1. Appointment of the State Commissioner in Prussia on 6.24.35 and the State Commissioners in Bremen, Hesse, Lippe, Mecklenburg, Saxony. 2. Ordinance of general church elections by the Reich Act of 7.15.33. 3. Radio speech by the Führer on 7.22.33 in favor of the German Christians. 4. Ban on publications about church matters through the Reich Interior Minister's unpublished decree of 11.6. and 11.7.34. 5. Appointment of the State Finance Department through the Prussian Act of March 1935. 6. Appointment of the Arbitration Bureau through the Reich Act of June 1935. 7. The Act for the Securing of the German Evangelical Church of 9.24.35 and the state church councils appointed thereupon. Toward individual clergymen: 1. Arrest of the Bishop of Württemberg and Bavaria in 1934. 2. Transfer of clergymen to concentration camps, specifically in Saxony and Nassau-Hesse. 3. Expulsions of clergymen from their boroughs of office, in some cases even from their home provinces, specifically in Prussia. 4. Arrests of 700 pastors in Prussia on the occasion of the pulpit declaration against neo-heathenism ordered by the Old Prussian Synod in March 1935. 5. Constant hindering of confessional services, public speaking bans for clergymen and laymen, in some cases for all of Germany, among others.) The Evangelical people, to whom the Führer ensured the freedom of the Church before the imposed elections (see Telegram to the Reich President on 7.12.33), could only be informed insufficiently about the progress of the struggle against the Church. Although the so-called "work of pacification," which had begun with the establishment of the Reich Church Ministry and the appointment of the church committees, has resolved several grievances previously brought about by statesmen and party members by means of state toleration, the Evangelical Christian who looks more closely will, however, recognize that this work of pacification keeps the Church in administrative and financial dependency on the state, robs it of the freedom of its preaching and order, and forces it to tolerate false doctrine.

It must be a severe shock to him that the preamble of the act of 9.24.35 introducing the "pacification" presents an untrue picture of the origin of the unrest in the German Evangelical

Church and presents state interventions in Church affairs as non-interventions, indeed as services rendered to the Church by the state.

This approach by the state places a hardly bearable burden on the members of Evangelical congregations who stand by the Word of God revealed to us and the confessions of the fathers and who therefore know what they as Christians owe to their nation and its government.

4. De-Confessionalization

Under the watchwords "de-confessionalization" and "overcoming confessional division," a movement has begun with the aim of making it impossible for the Church to work with the public.

The Evangelical Church has had its own youth organizations taken from it by an agreement concluded between the Reich Youth Leader and the Reich Bishop, who had not been authorized to enter this agreement. Yet even the support for Evangelical members of the National Socialist youth organizations guaranteed in that agreement is often impeded. From the topmost leaders of the organized youth to the lowest structures of the Evangelical youth, their Church is repeatedly treated with contempt and suspicion, and attempts are consistently made to undermine their faith in the revelation entrusted to the Church (see, among others, Obergau decree 8/35 of the League of German Girls Obergau, dated 12.5.35: "Not only for leaders, but for all girls, I forbid with immediate effect the provision of aid in any form of confessional work [helpers at children's church services, etc.].") Hitler Youth posting in Halle-Saale: "Where are the enemies of our Hitler Youth? The religious fanatic, who still shuffles on his knees with his longing gaze directed upward, spends his time on attending church and prayer ... We as Hitler Youths have only contempt or ridicule for those young people who still run to their laughable Evangelical or Catholic clubs to devote themselves to highly superfluous religious sentimentalism." Baldur v. Schirach on 11.5.35: "Rosenberg's path is also the path of the German youth."). While the current regime officially supports positive Christianity, its new institutions, such as the Agricultural Year and the Labor Service, not only offer as good as no opportunities to provide pastoral care for their members; contact between the pastor and his young parishioners, for instance through personal visits or even through sending Evangelical parish newsletters and publications, is even made largely impossible (see, among others, Letter from the Government President in Breslau dated 10.22.35: "In response to your letter of October 15 to the camp leader Miss Schädel regarding the sending of religious written material, I hereby inform you of what the Reich and Prussian Minister of Science, Education, and Public Instruction emphasized in a decree: that the

sending of religious written material to youths obliged to participate in an Agricultural Year is prohibited."). The fact that Evangelical members of a Labor Service camp were not given permission to attend church service on Good Friday, for example, shows how far this "de-Christianization" has progressed (see evidence). The regulations on religious care for children in their Agricultural Year also speak a very clear language.

The de-confessionalization of schools is being intentionally supported by the state. The abolition of denominational schools is being carried out in violation of the Church's rights (see evidence). Parents' consciences are hereby being placed under extreme pressure from the party (see evidence).

Lawful syllabi for religious education lessons are being disregarded in many cases. Thus, key elements of biblical teachings have already been eradicated from religious education lessons in many places (Old Testament), and un-Christian material has entered the syllabus (Old German heathenism) (see, among others, citation of such a decree from the Anhalt state ministry, against which the women's group of the G.E.C. vainly placed an objection); school church services and school prayers are being increasingly neglected or restructured in line with a de-Christianization of the extracurricular forms of communal life in schools.

The training of theologians at the universities is being increasingly entrusted to professors and lecturers who have proven to be teachers of false doctrine; specifically, the destruction of the theological faculties in Prussia provides a telling picture in this instance. In the field of examinations, the Ministry of Education and Public Instruction has demanded the reinstatement of false doctrinarians to the examination commissions.

This de-confessionalization of public life, which is more and more forcing back the Christian influence and Christian work in broadcasting, the press, and public lectures, is in reality tantamount to de-Christianization.

5. National Socialist Ideology

It is demanded of the Evangelical members of the Nazi organizations that they commit themselves unrestrictedly to the National Socialist ideology (see Ley: "The party makes a claim of totality upon the soul of the German people. It cannot and will not tolerate another party or ideology ruling in Germany. We simply believe that the German nation can become eternal only through National Socialism ... And that is why we demand the very last German, be he Protestant or Catholic ..."). This ideology is frequently presented and passed off as a positive replacement for Christianity, which is to be overcome.

If blood, race, national customs, and honor gain the rank of eternal values here, the Evangelical Christian is forced by the First Commandment to reject this estimation. If the Aryan man is glorified, the Word of God attests to the sinfulness of all men.

If anti-Semitism is forced upon the Christian, obliging him to despise Jews as part of the National Socialist ideology, the Christian commandment of brotherly love stands together with him against this principle.

It is a particularly severe conflict of the conscience for the members of our Evangelical congregations if they have to combat the intrusion of these anti-Christian ideas into their children's lives, as befits their duty as Christian parents.

6. Ethics and Justice

We observe with great concern that a morality alien to Christianity is intruding into our nation and threatening to demoralize it.

We are well aware that the Führer acknowledged the ethical importance of the Christian denominations for the life of the nation in his speech of March 23, 1933. However, the power of the new ethical thinking has so far been stronger than these words.

That which is of benefit to the nation is now largely regarded as good

(see the lecture by the head of the N.S.D.A.P. Bureau for Legal Policy, Dr. Barth, at the Leipzig Jurist Conference of 1936: "If Reich Minister Dr. Frank introduced the legal policy principle: 'That which benefits the German nation is just; that which harms it is unjust,' then it contains points for understanding the innermost bond between the necessities and the legal conscience of the nation."). Thus, it could be declared with the knowledge of department head Derichsweiler that the expression "positive Christianity" is only used in Article 24 of the party manifesto in the same way one keeps the whole truth from a sick patient (see evidence).

Such behavior places considerations of expediency above the veracity called for in God's commandments. The manner in which the struggle against the Church is presented (see above), the treatment of the Evangelical press and Evangelical assemblies, the reversal of the concept of voluntary participation to its opposite with respect to collections and recruitment to join organizations, etc. (see considerable evidence) are particularly clear evidence to the Evangelical Christian of this disregard for the commandment of truthfulness arising from the spirit of moral ethics according to national benefit.

The Evangelical Church is particularly glad and grateful that the number of oaths before court has shrunk to a fraction of its previous size under the rule of the new state, in view of Christ's demands in the Sermon on the Mount.

It must all the more deplore it as a victory of anti-Christian spirit that the oath has experienced a shocking accumulation as a pledge of allegiance and obligation and thus a shocking devaluation.

As every oath is a declaration or assurance given before the eyes of God, even if God's name is not expressly stated, the fact that many people are induced to swear one oath after another at brief intervals necessarily robs the oath of its dignity and leads to the desecration and misuse of God's name. Evangelical parents find it particularly unbearable that their young children are induced to make oath-like pledges (see Pledge of the Hitler Youth: "I pledge to serve the Führer Adolf Hitler loyally and selflessly in the Hitler Youth. I pledge to work at all times toward the unity and comradeship of the German youth. I pledge obedience to the Reich Youth Leader and all leaders of the Hitler Youth. I pledge by our holy flag that I will always try to be worthy of it. So help me God.").

Increasing numbers of people are telling their pastors that they do not feel bound by an oath that would have threatened their existence if they had refused to take it.

It would be easier for the Evangelical Church to combat this way of thinking, which runs so contrary to the demands of Christianity, among its members, if Christians were permitted to interpret the oath in the natural sense that no oath can cover actions that go against God's commandments. In fact, however, it has happened that earnest Christians who were fully prepared to be obedient to their authorities according to God's will have been removed from their offices because they claimed such an interpretation for themselves (see evidence). This makes it very difficult for civil servants to take an absolutely truthful stance.

The evaluation of the ballot papers in the last Reichstag election placed many Evangelical Christians in conflicts of conscience because the benefit to the nation was placed above truthfulness. Evangelical Christians who stood openly by their decision for the sake of truthfulness were ridiculed or even mistreated (see evidence).

On the basis of the Holy Scripture, the Evangelical Christians are convinced that God is the protector of justice and of those without rights; we therefore consider it a renunciation of God

when despotism enters into matters of justice and things happen "that are not just before the Lord."

These include not only the many incidents in the struggle against the Church, but also the denial of justice effected by the appointment and the behavior of the ecclesiastical Arbitration Bureau (N.B. The Reich Act on the arbitration process in matters of the German Evangelical Church of 6.24.35 robs ecclesiastical disputes of the justice process and puts in its place the decision of a political instance which, according to the explanations of a leading member of this Arbitration Bureau, has given itself the task of acting in a "politically constructive" manner. This Arbitration Bureau has now, however, after one year, not yet ruled on any of the approximately seventy matters pending. This renders those involved in these matters practically devoid of rights.).

The Evangelical conscience, which knows itself to be partly responsible for the nation and the government, is most severely burdened by the fact that there are still concentration camps in Germany, which refers to itself as a constitutional state, and that the measures of the Secret State Police have been withdrawn from any review by judges.

When the honor of Evangelical Christians loyal to their confession has been attacked, they often do not receive the protection of honor that other citizens are granted (see evidence).

Evangelical Christianity also sees in these matters the danger that an anti-Christian spirit could come to dominate our ethical and legal way of thinking.

7. God's Claim

We have attempted to found openly the great concern of broad circles of Evangelical Christians that leading forces in the current regime are carrying out a suppression of the Evangelical Church, a demoralization of its faith, an eradication of Evangelical morals; in short, a de-Christianization of the broadest scope. In this opinion formed on the basis of attentive observations of matters, we cannot be pacified by allusions to contradictory statements and facts.

We politely request that the Reich government considers the question of whether it can be beneficial to our nation in the long run if it continues to follow the path taken up to now. Even now, the constraint upon consciences, the persecution of Evangelical convictions, the reciprocal spying and sounding out exercise a malign influence.

Even a great matter must eventually lead a nation to perdition, if it opposes the will of God as revealed to us. God's Church will survive, even if millions of Evangelical Christians should have to lose their salvation in the attempt to de-Christianize the German nation. The German nation, however, does not have the augury that the poison of an anti-Christian spirit will not damage it, even if it takes a long

time to reach the understanding that it was cheated out of its best inheritance by those who took the Lord Jesus Christ from it.

Our nation is threatening to break through the boundaries set for it by God: it intends to make itself the measure of all things. That is mortal pride revolting against God.

In this context, we must inform the Führer and Reich Chancellor of our concern that he is receiving a great deal of veneration in a form that is due solely to God.

Only a few years ago, the Führer himself disapproved of his picture being placed on Evangelical altars. Now, his opinion is being ever more uninhibitedly made the norm not only for political decisions, but also for morals and justice in our nation, and he himself is being clothed in the religious dignity of the national priest, indeed of the mediator between God and the nation

(see Dr. Goebbels on 4.19.36.: "When the Führer addressed his most recent appeal to the German people on March 28, a deep tremor moved across the entire nation. One had the feeling Germany had been transformed into a single church, in which His intercessor now stepped up to the high seat of the Almighty to bear witness ... We felt as if this clamor of a nation for freedom and peace could not echo back from heaven unheard. It was religion in the deepest and most mysterious sense. A nation professed itself to God through its speaker and placed its fate and life trustingly in his hand ..." Speeches by Göring, among others).

We ask, however, for freedom for our nation to be allowed to take its path to the future under the sign of Christ's cross, so that grandsons will not one day curse fathers because, despite building and leaving behind a state on earth, they closed the doors to God's kingdom for them.

What we have said to the Führer in this letter, we had to say out of responsibility to our office. The Church is in the hand of the Lord.

The clerical members of the Provisional Executive of the German Evangelical Church:

signed Müller, Albertz, Böhm, Forck, Fricke.

The Council of the German Evangelical Church:

signed Asmussen, Lücking, Middendorff, Niemoeller, von Thadden."