

CONFESSING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY (CCC) in S.A.

This Community is confessing Jesus Christ as

the one who confessed God by  
interpreting the Scriptures and revealing God rightly  
through words and deeds  
healing the sick and consoling the mourning  
forgiving the sinners and calling them in his community  
forming this community for members of all nations and races  
dismantling self-justification and hypocrisy  
confessing God to the poor and oppressed, to the rich and  
oppressors  
resisting violence and suffering injustice up to death  
resurrecting through the power of God  
being present today and in future through His Word,  
sacraments and spirit amongst His followers  
offering peace and justice, joy and hope to mankind.

Therefore the Confessing Christian Community

- is following Him
- through communication in prayer, studying of Scriptures  
Holy Communion with members from all churches, nations and  
races
- taking care of the sick and lonesome
- standing for the poor and oppressed
- opposing against discrimination
- speaking the truth to those in power
- rejecting violence and being prepared to suffer injustice
- expecting the Spirit of Christ to show them means and ways  
for the formation of a brotherly community for the benefit of  
South Africa.

Members of this Community

sign a membership card with the following text

"I confess Jesus Christ the Lord as witnessed through the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and the Ecumenical Creeds

I commit myself life to follow Him

I communicate with His followers from all nations and races

I stand against discrimination and violence

I reject Apartheid totally

I work for a peaceful and just society with equal rights and chances regardless of colour for all South Africans.

According to this commitment

members will gather in small circles, if possible weekly for prayer and study, multi-racial communication and action.

Notes on the Confessing Church in Germany 1933-36

- The National Socialist's Party programme stated that it "stands on the principles of a positive Christianity" par. 25.
- Hitler interpreted himself repeatedly as a performer of a historic mission given to him by the Almighty, the providence, to lead the Herrenvolk, the Aryan race to ruling power in the world through preserving blood and soil (Blut und Boden) from racial mixture and wrong influences. This concerned the Jews especially, who were considered as being the racial, moral and intellectual "evil of the world", using the international Capitalism to receive all power in the world and the Red Danger of the Bolschewism as well. Both had to be eradicated while all Slavish nations were considered as inferior to the Herrenrasse, due to serve it with its manpower and resources.
  
- The German Christianity has been affected for such ideology by
  - the loss of the Deutsches Reich, dream of unity which was realised from 1871-1918 only
  - the new national emphasis since 1933, growing prosperity, political and military power
  - the antipathy against the strange, smart, Jewish race, the murderers of the Son of God, who had often been persecuted or concentrated into ghettos
  - the fear of Communism and Bolschewism and its ideology of a classless society, its military, atheism and power.
  
- The German Catholic bishops agreed on a Concordate in July 1933 hoping to bind Hitler and to protect the Catholic Church against him.
  
- The 28 Evangelical Landeskirchen approximately 14 Lutheran, 12 United (Luth. and Reformed), 2 small Reformed, loosely bound through the Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund since 1922 considered a stronger constitution of Kirchenbund, eventually a Reichs Kirche and elected a Reichsbischof in May 1933 who stepped back after a few weeks.  
Hitler strongly favoured the Deutsche Christen who mixed National Socialists ideology with Christian faith and ordered general elections for all local Evangelical Church Councils in July 1933 which won two thirds of all seats through his public support

The churches of the Altpreuussische Union (some Lutheran and Reformed churches united in 1831 through the will of the Prussian King), accepted the so-called Aryan paragraph in September 1933, stating:

No person of non-Aryan descent or married to a person of non-Aryan descent can be appointed or called to be a minister or Administrative church officer.

Rev. M. Niemöller proclaimed the Pastors Emergency Association (Pfarrernotbund) immediately afterwards whose members signed a membership card declaring:

1. I commit myself to fulfill my office as a servant of the Word only bound to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confessions of the Reformation as the right interpretation of the Holy Scripture.
2. I commit myself to protest without reserve against any violation of such Confession.
3. According to my best ability I know myself co-responsible for such who are persecuted because of such Confession.
4. Due to this obligation I witness that the praxis of the Aryan paragraph within the church is a violation of such confession

7.000 of the 15.000 Evangelical pastors joined the Pfarrernotbund within four months and 4.700 kept membership up to the end of the war.

By a Circular in November 1933, Niemöller asked its members to refuse answers to their church councils concerning their race and descent.

Due to this call for disobedience his church council repeatedly removed him from ministry, finally in Feb. 1934, but he continued with congregational work as the majority of his congregation stood beside him.

He published theses concerning the Aryan question in the church in Nov. '33, saying: Whether this is sympathetic to us or not, we have to accept the converted jeers as being members in the congregation fully entitled by the Holy Spirit.

But when in 1933 Germany left the Nations League (Völkerbund) the Pfarrernotbund cabled to Hitler: We are thankful for this manly deed and the clear word which are preserving Germany's honour. We promise true fellowship and prayer. It marks the national attitude of churchmen fighting against suspicion that they could not be national thinking Germans simultaneously.

Confessing Congregations arose spontaneously which formed confessing Synods and together with the large Luth. Landeskirchen from Bayern and Württemberg and the Pfarrernotbund they formed the Confessing Community of the Germ. Ev. Church (with appr. 500.000 and 300.000 signed members only in the provinces of Westfalen and Rheinland in 1935).

The Confessing Synod of the Germ. Ev. Church in Barmen, May 1934, with 139 delegates from 18 out of the 28 Landeskirchen accepted the Theological Declaration of Barmen which gave Kirchenkampf its fundamental thesis: "Jesus Christ is . . . . God's mighty claim upon our life . . . . We reject the false doctrine that there could be areas of our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ' but to other Lords."

But the essential motives of the Kirchenkampf have neither been political nor directed against the National Socialist System as such, but only as far as it assumed divine power and hindered the preaching of the Gospel. The Confessing Church as well as the Pfarrernotbund avoided carefully to be misunderstood as being a political opposition.

Karl Barth stated in July 1935 the Confessing Church was fighting more or less seriously with concern to her liberty and the purity of her message but has been silent with regard to the attacks against the Jews, the treatment of political opponents, the oppression of the truth by the press and so many other thoughts with regard to those the old prophets certainly would have spoken.

The Confessing Church protested for the first time when during the Olympic Games 1936 very generally against discrimination outside its walls.

Karl Barth commented: "Numerous people, also in Germany itself have been waiting for such a word. But it came too late." Obviously political inactivity and indifference stemmed from the subservient attitude of many church leaders towards the authorities. (With reference to E. Beyreuther "Die Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes" and D. Schmielt, "Martin Niemöller")

S.A. Church bodies and leaders took many stands against all kinds of discrimination through the Apartheid ideology and policy, e.g.: various strong declarations of the Cath. Bishops since the middle of 1950

The Cottesloe Consultation - 1968

The SACC Message to the People of S.A. 1970

The Open Letter concerning Nationalism, National Socialism and Christianity, 1971

The SACC declaration on Consc. Objection 1974

The Findings and Recommendations of the FELCSA Church Leaders Seminars and the "Appeal to FELCSA Christians", Feb. 1975

The activities of the C.I., including Sprocas publications, its stand against the Schlebusch Commission, etc.

The protests and speeches of Anglican Synods and Bishops  
with regard to certain problems

What has really been the effectivity of such declarations?

Why have they failed to change the attitudes of the man in  
the pew and his congregation?

What chances has a Confessing Community of Christians  
to become more effecient?

Who will join it?

Why did it come to existence years ago?

What will be its special involvement ?

What is to be learned from the problems, faults and effects  
of the Confessing Church in Germany ?