

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Christ and Community in the Midst of Persecution.

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 January 2010

Preacher: Rev. Ben Roberts

- [0 : 00] Well, it's great to be here, and thank you for the welcome and the introduction. And Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he was a man, he was a pastor, he was a theologian, an author, a teacher, and most of you know, ultimately, he was a martyr.
- And among historians, this is probably what he's remembered for, is his association with the German resistance against Hitler. And it was in this resistance that he was part of a conspiracy to actually assassinate Hitler, a failed assassination attempt.
- But I think that among Christian circles, at least, there's more than kind of just this fascination with the dramatic events that conspired in Nazi Germany, or just this juicy conspiracy story.
- I think actually there's a fascination with a man, as his friend, Eberhard Betke, said, one more, an unusual combination of thought and action, a life as a martyr and a theologian.
- And so now, over two full generations after his death, his writings continue to be published, enjoyed by a wide range of readers. Of his writings, *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, are probably most commonly read.
- [1 : 25] And they're continued Christian favorites. And I think it's because they capture dedication to the teachings of Christ. And they're really incredibly inspirational, if you've read them.
- Instantly appealing, really easy to connect with and understand. And I'm sure those of you that have read von Hofer would agree with that. But I think it's the case that, though we have a general awareness of his role in resisting Nazism and its spread, we may not have considered this connection between his theology of Christ, his theology of church and community, and how that connected with this seminary that he actually founded in Finkenwald.
- And I have in mind, the seminary, it actually ran from 1935 to 1937 in Finkenwald, Germany. And it was a seminary and intentional community that he set up.
- And it was actually that experience, running that seminary, that inspired him to write both *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, those Christian classics that I mentioned earlier. And what is fascinating that this community that he was the president of and essentially kind of founded and got this seminary rolling, and it was birthed in the midst of probably the most difficult political situation that the church faced in Germany.
- And, you know, at this point, Nazism had already really infiltrated not only kind of the political sphere of Germany, but also the church to a very deep degree.
- [3 : 01] So I'm going to phrase my main point as a question to kind of help us focus on what we're going to be talking about. And that is, what is the connection between von Hofer's theology, his resistance against Nazism, and this intentional community he founded at Finkenwald?
- And put another way, what is it in his thinking that led him to respond to Nazism by founding the seminary? It's perhaps not what we would expect, I would think.

And so I'll answer this question in three lines of investigation. First, talking about how von Hofer's theology reacted and kind of combined different elements in the thought of the day, in German theology.

And then I'll talk about how this theology that von Hofer had really reacted and clashed with Nazism. And finally, I'll discuss how this theology manifested on the ground, how it looked when it was put into practice at Finkenwald.

And my hope is that by the end of this time together, you'll agree that there's great wealth to be gained from looking at von Hofer and from further discussion of how he tried to live out of his faith and kind of stay faithful to the Word of God in the situation that he was involved in.

[4 : 26] And I think that as we reflect on it, there are some points of identification for us in our current culture and church climate. So we can talk about that a little more at the end when you grill me with questions.

But let's take a moment, first of all, to set ourselves in his context and kind of really remember and resonate with where von Hofer was.

He wrote this and life together. And just as Christ was surrounded by enemies, he wrote, So Christians too belong not in seclusion, but in the midst of enemies.

And I think this was not only a profound theological statement, but this was really a lived reality for von Hofer and the rest of the confessing church in Germany. Because at his time in Finkenwald, he was indeed surrounded by enemies.

So between these years that we're focusing on, 1935 to 1937, there were already strong factions within the German church. And so the church was reacting to this new tide of German nationalism.

[5 : 38] Now the largest such faction or group was the German Christian movement. And this was a nationalistic movement that arose within the German evangelical church. And actually their explicit aim, this group within the church, was to officially link the German evangelical church, which was what they called basically the Protestant church in Germany.

Their aim was to link this church to the Nazi regime ideologically. And so in some ways they were seeking this kind of traditional Lutheran fusion of state and church.

They were trying to kind of imitate the way the church had supported and had been connected with the state through the years. And I think they, for some reason, saw in the Nazi party ideals that they would benefit both the church and the nation if they were adopted.

And actually when you look at this percentage-wise by the clergy, these German Christians represented the large majority of Protestants, which is disappointing, I guess, to say the least.

So by 1935, these German Christians, they not only had the tacit support of kind of the ministry of interior of the German nation, but they had already jettisoned much of Christian doctrine.

[7 : 07] They had pretty much taken what people would understand as central to the faith and they had sidelined it. And in its place they had enthroned the themes of nationalism, German racial superiority and purity.

And I'll read you actually some excerpts that I brought with me so you can get an idea of where their thinking was. And these are from actually their charter statement, which was founded in 1932.

They composed this document to kind of show what this church movement was about. They say, We see in race, nationality, and nation orders of life given and entrusted to us by God.

For these reasons, racial miscegenation, which you know probably means racial mixture of any kind, has to be opposed. The German foreign missions have been admonishing the German nation for a long time.

Keep your race pure. And it's told us that faith in Christ does not destroy, but heightens and sanctifies the race. This one's perhaps scarier.

[8 : 14] We know something about Christian obligation and charity toward the helpless, but we also demand the protection of the nation from the unfit and the inferior. And we see a great danger to our nationality in the Jewish mission.

It promises to allow foreign blood into our nation. We object to the Jewish mission in Germany, so long as Jews have citizenship, and so long as there's danger of racial mixture and bastardization.

And so these are actually their explicit ambitions of the German Christian movement. This is the vision they had for the church in Germany, and where they saw Germany going. And they were working hard to bring everybody into line with that vision.

Now in contrast was the Confessing Church, which arose in opposition to the German Christians and against many of the policies of the Nazi regime. And they were especially opposed to exactly these ideas within the German Christians.

Their extreme nationalism, their commitment to racial purity, and just the way they had completely departed from historic Christian faith and norms.

[9 : 28] Now among the prominent leaders of the Confessing Church were both Dietrich Bonhoeffer, of course, and Swiss theologian, many of you know, Karl Barth. And Barth is actually the one who pinned the Barman Declaration.

And that was their official response in kind of their counter-charter statement against the German Christians. And it's actually an amazing document, the Barman Declaration. And I highly suggest reading it if you're interested in this time period.

But I brought a section of this to cheer you up a little bit. And speaking of the churches here which joined together, in signing the Declaration it reads, so the Confessing Church we're speaking of here, it was not their intention to found a new church or to form a union.

Their intention was, rather, to withstand in faith and unanimity the destruction of the confession of faith, and thus of the Evangelical Church in Germany. In opposition to attempts to establish the unity of the German Evangelical Church by means of false doctrine, by the use of force and insincere practices, the Confessional Synod insists that the unity of the Evangelical Churches in Germany can come only from the Word of God, in faith, through the Holy Spirit.

Thus alone is the Church renewed. So as you can see, this declaration emphatically upheld the authority of the Word of God as the foundation of the Church.

[11 : 00] And it rejected the influence of political ideologies as having power over the Church. Now it's estimated that 7,000 German clergy actually signed this, the Barman Declaration, at the time that it was drafted.

Unfortunately, the number of clergy who supported the German Christian movement was 27,000. So that's about 30% actually signed this document. And actually, one of the things I think that was a huge struggle for Bonhoeffer is the way that these confessing ministers that had signed this document were actually continually pulled away from it through kind of political fear tactics.

And so this number continued to dwindle throughout the war, actually. Now the regime itself, the political regime of the Nazism was not surprisingly very hostile towards the confessing Church.

Eventually they shut down this alternative seminary in Finkenwald. And it's clear, actually, that the Nazis had a very deceitful and kind of manipulative approach to the churches.

And their ultimate aim was either to actually completely destroy the Church or to marginalize it to a point where it had no voice to resist them. And so we can see that actually with the former group, the German Christians, they were very successful in just manipulating them to kind of agree with where they were going.

[12 : 30] But after this declaration, their goal for the confessing Church was simply destruction, basically, or just pushing them out of the picture.

So this is the bleak historical moment that Bonhoeffer was in. He's part of a minority theological group. He's an enemy of the state, yet he's faithful to his convictions about the Word of God.

And so the question is, why would Bonhoeffer, at this particular moment, with enemies on every side, decide to run a seminary in Finkenwald? What led him to this stunning experiment, basically, which his creative theological vision of Christian community and discipleship was really shaping?

Why would he do this? Well, I think the first piece we can find for this answer is in the philosophical and theological influences that were floating around in Germany.

And kind of the way Bonhoeffer took those, kind of sifted them, and just kind of mixed them together. It's pretty fascinating. So we'll take a look at that. Now, two of his teachers, which were influential, were teachers at Tübingen.

[13 : 51] And that was, well, I'm sorry, one was his teacher and one was a philosopher that influenced Germany. And so his teacher was Adolf von Harnack.

And he's a famous historical theologian. And Bonhoeffer kind of derived from him this strongly human and earthly present view of Christ.

And so Bonhoeffer, he was unwilling to go so far as kind of the extreme liberal side or view of Harnack, which would say that Jesus was simply a man.

And so he's still affirming Jesus' divinity. But he was actually, he was undoubtedly influenced by Harnack. And Harnack really represents the traditional liberal theological thought in Germany very well.

And it was really prevalent in dominated Germany in the 20th century. And so what's interesting is that this influence on Christ is historical, this emphasis on him, on his humanity, that coupled together with Hegel's philosophy.

[15 : 03] And so for Bonhoeffer, he was kind of raised in the school of thought, seeing the church as a very historical and present institution. And both Hegel and Harnack represent this liberal tradition.

And they see the link between the rise and action of the state and God's work within the world and church. And so that's to say that this philosophy and theology of Hegel and Harnack embraced the idea that God would use nations and his purposes in the world.

And this actually was the idea that as ideas and nations would come together and clash that they would form this synthesis and that would be a good thing.

It would bring a better world, this kind of clash and moving forward. And actually, it's this type of thinking which really allowed Nazis into flourish in Germany because it really put this stamp of approval on this aggression and ideology that was going around, kind of this idea of manifest destiny that was in the German nation at the time.

So though Bonhoeffer borrowed from both of these thinkers, he certainly modified their approach and he formed his own theology. And he actually, he wrote in departure from this that the embodiment of the church is Christ.

[16 : 26] Or rather, the church is the embodiment of Christ. So this led to very different implications. Bonhoeffer did, he did still see God working primarily through the church in history.

He rejected the idea that God was primarily working through the state because that idea is twisted to nationalism. Rather, he said, God is working through the church. Christ is present in the church community and that's how God works.

And so the legacy of liberal theology is really actually strong in much of his thinking. But at the same time, he's still very classically Christ-centered. And this emphasis can be seen by looking at two of his other influences, which I would say were better influences, which would be Martin Luther and Karl Barth.

And so he also takes the idea of Luther that justification comes from outside of ourselves. This is very important for his theology as well.

And actually, Luther had taken on this symbolic kind of status in Germany at the time. And so everybody was looking to Luther as they were trying to redefine the German nation.

[17 : 48] And so both the Nazis were citing Luther and saying, this is where we're going. And Bonhoeffer was also looking to Luther for guidance, basically, I think.

And so he did not interpret Luther's theology as many in the German nation. But he kept justification a one-way affair. He didn't kind of change Luther's theology into this human kind of human idealism.

And this is also what he drew from Karl Barth, is that faith enters the world through the revelation of Jesus Christ, and it's not a human endeavor to be attained. And though revelation is important for both of them, for Barth, you may know, he believed that the Word of God was made real through personal encounter.

As people come to the Word of God, it kind of becomes the Word of God. For Bonhoeffer, he's really, he's focused on community.

He's focused on the church as really embodying Christ and revealing Christ to the world. to the world. So he's agreeing that the Word of God is shaping our ideas, but he's really historically and focused on the church and its ethical outreach.

[19 : 17] And so this is a really interesting balancing act, actually. And you'll see that it kind of leads to interesting conclusions, both in the way that he shapes his community, the seminary, and in the way that he kind of finally ends up living his life and giving his life in resisting Hitler.

I know that was pretty heavy. It gets a little bit more manageable. So, let's look at Fink and Vol. And let's see how do these ideas that I've been talking about, how do they come to play?

In his book, *Life Together*, which some of you have probably read, Bonhoeffer clearly contrasts what he calls the psychic versus the spiritual human communities.

And by psychic, he means kind of a community that comes from the human mind. And by spiritual, he means a community that is composed by Christ. And he wants to emphasize the formation of Christ in community.

And he wants to say that community is a divine reality. It's not natural. It's not a result of coercion or power. And he saw that in the Nazi movement it was a very psychic version of societal shaping.

[20 : 37] And he characterized it by saying it comes from the natural urges, from the strengths and abilities of the human soul. It's a community which is set in opposition to the Christian community, which is characterized by agape, by love.

And so, we're all familiar with the Nazis, how they were shaping society in this very domineering and overbearing way. Hitler, in speaking of his Hitler youth, for example, said he desired them to become powerful, masterly, and cruel, fearless youth.

There must be nothing weak or tender about them. Another social agenda was their development of a pseudo-religion, actually, among the Nazi elites.

And in this project, they attempted to replace allegiance to God with allegiance to the Nazi party. And so, they did this by actually inventing cultic Nazi practices to replace the Christian ones. And so, they would do Nazi infant baptisms, they would substitute party dates for the yearly church count-like festivals and celebrations.

And they even actually devised a nationalistic German version of the Nicene Creed. I have some pictures of this for you. So, there's one of the Nazi baptism. You can see the woman on the left there holding the baby.

[21 : 58] And then, that's them actually baptizing a baby into the National Socialist Party. And here's the creed they came up with. I believe in the land of all the Germans and a life of service to this land and the pure blood shed in war and peace by the sons of the German national community.

So, this kind of manipulation is what he would call psychic shaping. They're manipulating, they're using human strength and ideology to control and to form this community.

right? And these were basically fear tactics were many of the other things they would use. But, luckily, Bonhoeffer's seminary presented a very different vision for impacting society.

And his response was, his response to these kind of tactics was to form a community that was focused on Christ, that was really characterized by humility and equality.

And so, you can compare the way that Hitler's underlings would kind of vie for power and vie for position to the way that Bonhoeffer interacted in his community of students where he actually, as the principal of the seminary, approached one of the students one day and said, will you be my confessor?

[23 : 18] Can I confess my sins to you? And I think that really nicely gives you a picture of the basic difference. That's Bonhoeffer with some students.

They look young, don't they? Well, the community at Finkenwald was actually, it was very monastic, interestingly enough.

And the main practices that Bonhoeffer had his students participate in was primarily Bible reading, personal meditation.

They took the Eucharist daily. and perhaps most surprisingly, he insisted on regular confession between peers. That was one of their daily practices and if they wouldn't participate, then they weren't a student, basically.

And so their daily life was a very set routine of spiritual disciplines. Before coming to take his position as the principal at this seminary, Bonhoeffer expressed an interest in observing the work of Gandhi and he also toured around England looking at monastic communities as he considered how am I going to shape these students?

[24 : 29] What principles do I want to imbibe them with? And so it is clear that even though he is very interested in passive resistance, he is not an isolationist, is he?

Because remember, his whole focus is the church influences the world by its ethical actions. The church is the embodiment of Christ to the world. That was what he believed. So what he was doing with this community was he was seeing these ministers formed in the spiritual disciplines and he was hoping through this intentional community and building Christian fellowship that they were going to be taught to influence the world.

They were going to be shaped to bear with one another and if need be to live out their discipleship in suffering and martyrdom which was a very, very real, there was a very real possibility and many of the confessing ministers did lose their lives as martyrs or just as enlisted soldiers as they were drafted and they were now this sense of community that bears burdens and suffers together is well illustrated in Bonhoeffer's book *Life Together* and this book *Life Together* is really the summation of his experience in trying to build this intentional Christian community and he went out of his way to demonstrate the value of the weak and seemingly useless in the church and you'll remember what the German Christians said in their statement that they know about Christian obligation and charity towards those who are helpless but they demand protection of the nation from the unfit and inferior and you know that the Nazis they would send the unfit and inferior in their society such as the handicapped and homosexuals and the racially impure they would send them to concentration camps for Bonhoeffer however

Christian community was actually incomplete without these members of society listen to this quote the exclusion of the weak and insignificant the seemingly useless people from everyday Christian life and community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ for in the poor brother and sister Christ is knocking at the door now his Christ-centered view of community is at play here shaping the reaction of the Christian community against the German Christians because the church is the expression of Christ each member of the community must be respected as the image of God Jew or German strong or weak now Finkenwald Seminary was shut down by the Gestapo after only two years of running apparently it was perceived as very threatening and what is interesting about that is it seems to really be the experience that hardened Bonhoeffer's resolve and he really changed his tactics to direct action in one of his lectures

Bonhoeffer presented the three ways that he saw the church as acting in reaction to a hostile state so he said first of all one thing the church can do is hold the state accountable to being the state hold it accountable to what the state has said it should do or he says if that fails the church can actually aid those who are injured by what the state has done but he puts a third option in there and he says that in his words one can put a spoke in the wheel itself if those two options fail or that is if we're unable to hold the state accountable if we're unable to aid those who are being injured by the state then actually we should engage in direct action and stop the state from doing what it's doing and so we can see that in Finkenvald in this community he's very much interested in training up ministers that are going to hold the state accountable that are going to aid those who are injured that are going to build this community and bring healing but after

[28 : 47] Finkenvald was shut down he did turn to option three didn't he he tried to become a spoke in the wheel directly and that was by actively plotting to stop Hitler through assassination and attempting to overthrow the Nazi party what do you think in the end did Bonhoeffer give up his vision of Christian community when he opted for direct control I'm not sure I mean the same theology which drove him in Finkenvald drove him to direct political action didn't it and his ethics which he wrote extensively about were both Christ centered but they were also incredibly worldly and that's actually what he called it he meant engaged by the world but he said he was trying to bring worldly Christians to bear on the world and so we see this in his book on ethics and he writes that the sacred and profane sometimes we see the world as divided between these two we see church as sacred and then we see the world out there as profane or as worldly and we put this divide between the two and Bonhoeffer said he saw the monk and the cultural protestant as these two ends of the spectrum but he refuses to leave that separation in place he brings them together and that's clear in his theology and also in Finkenvald and his view of

Christian ethics is really integral to how he views community because for Bonhoeffer there's no use in a Christian community which won't live out his convictions if they won't engage in political action then what's the point for Bonhoeffer at the same time however he sees that for a Christian community to be authentic to be truly Christian it has to be focused on the word prayer it has to be engaged in spiritual disciplines or it's not the church and so his legacy continues for good reason I think I mean he's really a synthesis of modern theology he's really taken some conservative and liberal streams and kind of put them together in the way that he wrote his theology and he's got this concern for the eminent for the world but he's also got a concern for the transcendent and for

Christ he was heroic in his resistance against Nazism he did stay faithful to the historic Christian faith and the word of God while vastly outnumbered by the large majority of his church and nation but ultimately he showed how committed he was to these ideas by giving his life in the pursuit of his Christian convictions it was these same convictions which brought into existence this community at Finkenwald that was characterized by Christ love humility and yet was at the same time determined to influence history and these are questions that we always have to ask as the church what makes the church what is the church and how does the church interact with those people who are outside the church and also how does the church interact with political authority and in this Bonhoeffer leaves some ethical and theological thinking for us to reflect on and through his community at Finkenwald we get an idea of this worldly

Christian that he had in mind a Christianity that is only content when it is ethically living out Christ's embodiment in his church but it is also characterized by the word and by prayer now some of us may resonate with Bonhoeffer and we certainly don't face the same kind of apostasy or persecution that the confessing church did we at St.

John's know something of trial but perhaps as we reflect on his commitment to community shaped by the word of God and also church that has an ethical imperative we will find encouragement in that that in his time we may I would guess that most of us would disagree with his a lot of his kind of theology but certainly his focus on a community which is shaped by the word of God but also a community that is not isolated a community that is impacting those around it are two things that are vital for where we are today so with that if you have any questions I would be happy to answer them yeah

[34 : 19] I'm curious while all this was going on in Germany in the 30s and some of the awful confessional stuff that was being written down by those who were joining or aligning themselves with the Nazi party what was the reaction of the churches around Europe what were the British saying what were the French saying what were the Italian church what were the Catholics saying what were the Protestants saying to the German church anybody try to ring them in yeah there were different reactions I mean in some degree there is I think there is you know even until the end of World War II it seems that there was some astonishment at what actually happens I mean people would read these things and I know that churches around Europe there were people that were condemning what was going on and there were certainly

Bonhoeffer actually left for a few years and went to New York because he felt like he just wasn't able to minister to kind of minister and his friends actually urged him to get out because they were like well you're going to run right head on into this thing but I mean it seems that there was this it seems that there was a divide there I mean the Catholic church actually was far more vocal within Germany in resisting this there were a lot of archbishops and such that were imprisoned and there was actually one that was martyred kind of directly at the start of these things and I'm not entirely actually sure the extent of that reaction I do know that there was that Bonhoeffer had friends in England and friends in the US that they're obviously unhappy with this but it doesn't seem that they were vocal enough to really do much that's my impression

I could be wrong but thank you if I may pop up yes please you were right I mean I was alive those days I wasn't significant in case you're wondering but I do remember that in Britain in general for two or three years before the war Hitler and his team Hitler during girls they were treated in the popular mind more as a joke than as a serious threat to western culture which they actually were and we simply did not hear about the church conflict that was going on in Germany we we didn't hear either what they were doing to the

Jews all of that had to wait until the end of the war and then so to speak the books were opened and in Britain we became aware and were amazed and somewhat ashamed actually that all of this had been going on and we had we not known we not bothered to find out we had not cared for the better so yes you may not tell it yes please I don't remember a great time but afterwards I discovered a large amount of influence in the Nazi body was sitting in it was actually practicing sickness and Hitler particular mentor was called Dietrich Erhard he was practicing sickness and after he died or passed on whatever they brought another one in so the whole

I think there was a polarization total polarization in not only the political sphere but also in the national religious yeah yeah yeah I mean the way that Hitler actually interacted with the churches is very kind of on and off so he would he would kind of at one hand he would kind of I mean the German Christians were really hoping to be to receive the stamp approval from the German party and Hitler actually he wanted to destroy the church ultimately he was willing to use the German Christians but he wanted the church to be destroyed and there was a lot of element of that revival of kind of what they would call German folk religion what we would call Satanism and they would kind of bring that in this is our true heritage and he would kind of spin spin webs that would say a lot of different things he would kind of use a lot of different tactics to try to gain control right right right right what you're calling the evangelical church was really different right and so was

[40 : 21] Bonhoeffer right and so I'm wondering what sort of justification if any would be found in Luther's writings to support what the evangelical church did in kind of giving up the faith in order to adopt the party line right and it's it's very interesting it's kind of like everybody in Germany at that time wanted to claim Luther and he had kind of but I think it was he was more of a symbolic figure than he was actually they weren't actually engaging with his writings they were just kind of I mean the German Christians were I mean I think you're spot on there right because they weren't actually there's nothing that they could actually use in Luther to support where they were going but they would but I mean I think when I compared the

Lutheran church and said that they were trying to achieve that what I was speaking of was the way that traditionally kind of the church and state were closely connected in Lutheranism but I mean people the Nazis and people who were aligned with them weren't actually using I mean there was anti-Semitism in Luther I mean we know that and so there are elements of that that they could latch on to but they weren't using his theology directly they were using him more as a symbol so that's the one side the other side is that I think you're right it's an interesting inconsistency in Bonhoeffer isn't it that a Lutheran would actually be the one to engage in this kind of action and I don't think you would expect it and it's well it was kind of like St. Paul taking on the Roman Empire I mean the German

Empire at the point at which he died was more territory than anybody else had conquered except Charlemagne and so it was a huge attempt you know and you have to be either crazy or you pick the past of martyrdom at a much earlier age and you decide this is where it's going to end and I know that right and I think he was he was actually in his writings you can see that he was well aware that he was likely to be killed and his friends attempted to spear him away to America actually to try to avoid that fate and while he was there he said how can I be here in safety how can I be teaching the church that they should resist and have a voice while I'm over here and I've taken myself out of danger and kind of consciously went back to Germany knowing that he would at least never leave Germany again and that he would most likely be killed he died quite close to the end of the war he did

I think just weeks before it ended he was given an ultimatum by Nancy Charlie and he flatly defied him so they haven't even needed right and actually he was protected for a long time by his friends he had worked his way in with these other people that were in the Nazi party that were actually trying to overthrow the Nazi party while appearing to be complicit and so he was protected by their influence for a long time and so for instance all the ministers within any minister to continue having your legal ordination were required to actually swear allegiance to Hitler at some point and so obviously that was a problem for the confessing ministers and Bonhoeffer basically through his friends never had to actually do that but once the whole assassination attempt crumbled and the

Nazis were able to say oh it's these people then he had no protection and he was faced with that choice and stayed firm with his commitments and was executed yes please a couple comments with Luther I think that Luther's role with the Nazis was more of a question of nationalism than the yes yes agreed yeah and closely related to that the Nazis may have had their own rituals that you mentioned but the overall context was one of oppression it wasn't so much being anti Lutheran or confessing church as it was being against another it was against the institution rather than the theology of the church per se that doesn't negate anything you said okay

[45 : 54] I'm not quite sure well I'm saying that the object for the Nazis was oppression and control of the country it was not to set up a parallel church per se agreed now you've mentioned a couple of times but I think one of the more interesting and important things that Bonhoeffer had many avenues to escape if you put it that way yes he did and he was in New York he had relatives who left Germany in political exile in 1936 and 1937 including some of his more distant relatives by marriage who were Jewish and it was certainly a prudent thing to do but on the other hand Bonhoeffer and many others did not they had ample opportunities if they really wanted to go that route right one thing you should say about that is that

Bonhoeffer was very well connected he was quite apart from being the church leader or the theologian and that the German resistance was unlike a lot of things we might think of these were not gorillas in the hillsides right so my question for you if you could go back to this question of Bonhoeffer's martyr especially not in 1937 but 1940 142 43 what is it that compelled him to stay in Germany he could very easily have stayed in New York or been in England or even in Spain but he did he kept going out and coming back yeah and I think you raised a really good point and I think that that's part of the that's another part of the draw to

Bonhoeffer as a person and as a theologian and I mean to take it back to the context of kind of some of the stuff that I've been presenting I think that that was I mean if you've read the cost of discipleship and those books I think it's easier to connect that thinking because he talks about for example that quote a Christian needs to live in the myths of enemies and he's very focused on this on the church as influencing the world ethically and as kind of standing standing so he wants us to be he wants the church to be focused on the word of God but also engaged in shaping the world and he sees that as very important and I think he realized that in leaving or in escaping he would be he would be kind of betraying what he saw as his calling as a

Christian that's what I that's how I understand it that he really saw a Christian's commitment to face suffering and to face persecution when necessary to stay true to the word of God and to stay true to the purpose of the church and influencing the world is that fair enough that's it yeah what would he say to our church that's a great question what's that bring in the storm troopers oh right listen to the word of God that's what he would have said I agree with you I think he would have said continue to be faithful and continue to be shaped by the word of God and I think that that was what he chose to do when he founded the seminary when he was thinking these are going to be the ministers that are going to carry on the faithful remnant of the church he immersed them in the word of God that was their daily life and ritual he immersed them in prayer in humility in confession and I do think that he would say that and he would probably encourage us to stay true no matter the cost and I think he would have the place to say that probably yeah yes following up on that thought do you think that the community of thinking well has something to teach us with respect to mutual confession it's something that's not a strong

Protestant tradition as one reads about the nature of the fellowship in that people community it had a remarkable remarkable property even though it was only two years and all the people who wrote about it subsequently reflect on how this was a dramatic experience yeah I think that that mutual confession is one of the things that we have tended to downplay in the Protestant Church and I do agree that that is to our loss and what he wrote about in Life Together was he said basically sometimes you need your brother to preach the word of Christ to you so he wouldn't be saying that in confession someone would be granting you forgiveness rather you come to them and confess and then in response I remind you this is I speak the word of Christ to you

[52 : 05] God Christ forgives you as we confess our sins we receive forgiveness in Christ and so I think that for us as humans sometimes we know the truth of the gospel but we're not able to grasp it but when we hear it from a brother or sister it becomes real it becomes concrete and we encounter Christ through them preaching the gospel to us he's quite an interesting bloke isn't he yes he had a passport he could travel anywhere he liked in Europe during the war suggested he was also a double spy he came from a highly privileged background he was an aristocrat of sorts German but he had to see the way the war was going at the time of the assassination what on earth did they think would be achieved by trying to remove

Hitler at that time they were losing the war and that was realised quite early on especially when the Americans came in how does a regenerated mind even take that on board did he slip into it through connections or something that he really wasn't a part of the planning of it or what but he kind of throughout in his earlier years when Nazism was gaining control and it was becoming clear that they were ramping up for war he was adamantly opposed against that even at that point even before the really awful abuses of the Nazis came clear to the German people he was very resistant to the idea of war and of the

German nation in war and what I understand from my research is that yes the conspirators did know that it was a war that they were going to lose and I think they just hoped to end it as soon as possible I think because they had some higher ups that were in the conspiracy some higher officials I think they were hoping that once they got Hitler out of the way they would be able to stop the war to sue■■■■■■■■ run things you know

And I do think you're right that on the military and political side of this, aside from the people who were doing it out of some sort of religious conviction, there was an idea that they knew that when they lost this war, Germany was going to be in a very bad place.

And that was the reason. They saw Hitler leading them over a cliff as a nation. And there's still that nationalism, right? They wanted to save their people by ending the war.

[55 : 53] In the classic Anglican church, there is the model of mutual confession, what we call the prayer, the Holy Commitment.

Yeah, that's one of the... And there's also actually, historically, there have been Anglicans who have engaged in private confession as well.

C.S. Lewis comes to mind as one of those that highly recommended interpersonal confession is important for his spiritual life. But you're right. You're right.

We're confessing to God, but also we all hear each other confessing together. James actually writes, confess your sins one to another and pray for each other that you may be healed.

He does. He does. Well, we're a little past 10. Thank you very much.

[57 : 00] Thank you. Thank you.

I want you to ask, President. and the German there was a middle position which was extremely tricky I mean if I were a Christian in 1934 and the two options that you presented me were the only options available I would have no difficulty in joining the confessional church because there is a lot of people I wonder, it's hard to say that the German church through the theological places of localism