



What are your thoughts as you look at this photograph? Discuss with your neighbor  
*(Be prepared to share your thoughts)*

# How did the Nazis control religious views?



Aim:

To understand how the Nazi's controlled the religious views of the German people



**“Neither Catholic nor Protestant has any future left. At least not for the Germans...**

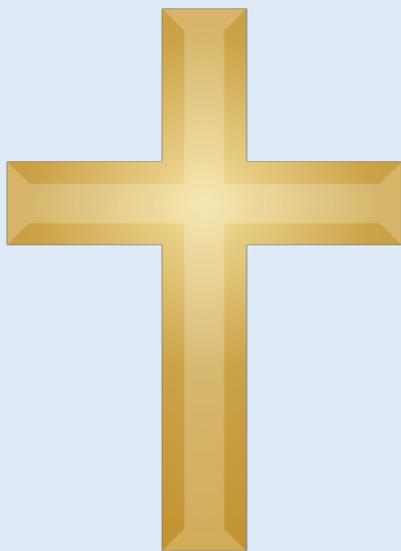
**Nothing will stop me stamping out Christianity in Germany, root and branch. One is either a Christian or a German. You can't be both...**

**Do you really believe the masses will ever be Christians again? Nonsense. Never again. No one will listen to it again. But we can hasten matters. The clergy will be made to dig their own graves. They will betray their God to us. They will betray anything for the sake of the miserable little jobs and incomes.”**

**What is Hitler's view about religion?  
Summarise the main points Hitler is making here? (at least 3 points)**



“Strength and violence is the only way forward, including creating a perfect Aryan racially pure state, there is no room for the weak. Hitler is Godlike in everyway”



“Tolerance, love, peace, forgiveness and respect for all people is the way forward. We must always help the weak as our one true God has asked”

**What are the main area of disagreement here? Is it possible for Nazism and Christianity to coexist?**



## What was the Religious context like in Nazi Germany?

- 2/3 of Germany was PROTESTANT
- 1/3 of Germany was CATHOLIC

Why might this be a problem for the Nazis?

You have 4 minutes to come up with a plan that will allow the Nazis to control religion and its influence. **NOTE:** You cannot kill anyone...



### What did the Nazis do?

1. *Attempted to reassure the Churches*
2. *Encouraged them to work with the Nazi Party*
3. *Quickly turned the Police State onto them*



# Ministry of Church Affairs: 1935

- The **Ministry of Church Affairs** was set up in 1935 in an attempt to weaken the hold of the Catholic and Protestant Churches on the people.
- The **German Faith Movement** was encouraged in the hope of replacing Christian values and ceremonies with pagan (non Christian ideas)
- Only **5%** of the population joined it.



Nazi Policies against Catholic Church

Church opposition to the Nazis

Split a clean page into 3 sections

Nazi Policies against Protestant Church

- 1933** – Concordat with the Roman Catholic Church – Nazis will stay out of religion, Church will stay out of politics
- 1933** – Reich Church formed – Protestants under Nazi control
- 1934** – Confessional Church formed – led by Niemoller and Bonhoeffer
- 1935** – Nazis set up Department of Church Affairs – shows they were trying to extend their control
- 1936** – organised Nazi campaigns against Church schools and youth groups
- 1937** – Christmas carols and nativity plays banned in schools. Pope issued a bull (announcement) called 'With burning anxiety', criticising Nazi policies
- 1941** – Cardinal Galen ( a Catholic) criticised the Nazi policy of euthanasia (killing mentally and physically handicapped people). He was so popular that the Nazis were too scared to take any action against him.



## 1. Catholic Church



- 1/3 Germany were Catholic
- Catholics owed their allegiance first to the Pope rather than Hitler, Hitler said a person was either Christian or German, not both
- Catholics also had their own schools which taught different values from Nazi schools

### Concordat (agreement), July 1933

- Hitler confirmed freedom of worship for Catholics and he would not interfere with Catholic schools
- The Catholic Church agreed that its priests would not interfere in politics and ordered German bishops to swear loyalty to the Nazis

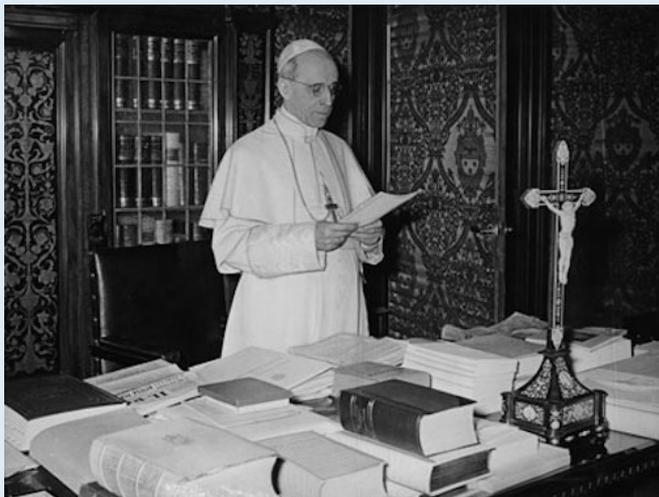
**Do you think the Nazi Party kept this promise as the 1930s went on?**

## 1. Catholic Church

As the 1930's went on, it became clear that Hitler was not going to keep his promises to the Pope:



- Catholic priests were harassed and arrested – many ended up in concentration camps
- Catholic schools were brought in line with state schools or closed
- The Catholic Youth League (Youth group) and other similar groups were brutally attacked by Hitler Youth groups and then banned
- Catholics were 'nt allowed to apply for apprenticeships
- Monasteries were closed down due to 'perversion', 'greed' and 'homosexuality'
- Police started supervising Church services
- Propaganda campaign against the Catholic Church began quickly



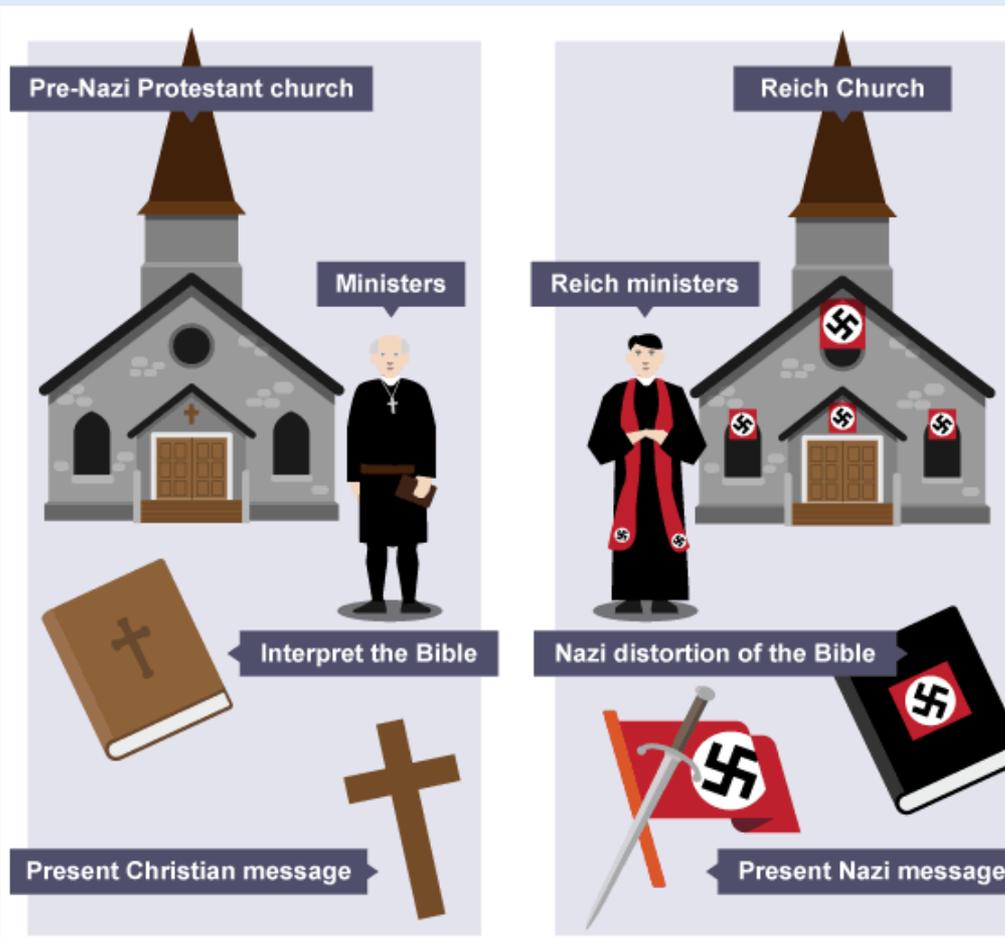
Pope Pius XI issued a stinging criticism of the Nazis known as '**With Burning Anxiety**', but it was pointless



The Nazi newspaper Der Sturmer (May 1938) "The Jewish Devil feeds criticisms of the Nazi regime to Catholic Priests."

## 2. Protestant Church

- Initially supportive of the Nazis, (main reasons Versailles / anti comm)
- 2/3 Germany were Protestant
- At first most Germans were grateful that Hitler had protected them from anti-Christian Communists that they worked with the Nazis



### The New Reich Church, 1936:

- Those Protestant churches in favour of working with the Nazis combined in 1936 to form a single Protestant Church, The Reich Church
- Led by Reich Bishop **Ludwig Muller**
- Only pastors who continued to support Hitler's views were allowed to provide services
- Some even allowed swastikas to be displayed
- Jews were not allowed to be baptised into the Reich Church and Jewish teachings from the Old Testament were removed from services

## Church Opposition: Protestants



**First they came for the Socialists,  
and I did not speak out--  
Because I was not a Socialist.  
Then they came for the Trade  
Unionists, and I did not speak out--  
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I  
did not speak out--  
Because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me--and there  
was no one left to speak for me.  
~ Pastor Martin Niemöller**

**What is the meaning of this poem by Pastor Martin Niemöller?**

## Church Opposition: Protestants



- Not all Protestants accepted the Nazi state. A few even spoke out against Hitler. Reich Bishop Ludwig had failed to unite the Protestants leading to some being persecuted by the **Ministry of Church of Affairs**
- 1935 - Himmler banned Protestant Youth Groups as well as Catholic Youth Groups following violence leaving ONLY the Hitler Youth / BDM
- **Pastor Niemoller in 1933 set up the 'Pastors' Emergency League (PEL) to campaign against Nazi** actions believing Reich Church was more about Nazism than Christianity and opposing the merging into one national church
- The PEL set up the **Confessional Church**, which now meant there were two Protestant Churches. 6000 members joined this, leaving 2000 in the Reich Church
- Niemoller also opposed the idea that only Aryans could be Pastors in the Reich church and stopping Jews becoming Christians
- 1937 - Niemoller was sent to a concentration camp following a previous 7 month spell in prison and PEL was banned. (**800** pastors in total sent to camps)

## Church Opposition: Protestants

- Bonhoeffer supported Niemoller helping set up the confessionals Church.
- Bonhoeffer preached against the persecutions believing it to be a religious duty
- 1937 – Gestapo banned him from preaching
- He secretly helped Jews escape Germany
- 1944 – Sent to a Concentration Camp, continued preaching against the Nazis and was hanged by the SS in 1945.



## Church Opposition: Catholic Church

- Some Catholics spoke out against Nazi persecutions.
- **400** sent to the **Priests block** at Dachau
- The Pope's *Burning Anxiety letter* was read out in every Catholic Church in the country encouraging rebellion. This just made Hitler angrier and sped up his persecutions
- Many Catholics opposed quietly by going to Catholic Church but not outwardly for fear of punishment
- Catholic Youth groups continued in the countryside until 1938
- Cardinal Galen critiqued Euthanasia T4 programme, and was too popular to be 'dealt with'



The boy in the middle of the picture carries the banner of the Catholic Sports Association (DKJ) when entering a stadium in 1933. The leader of the DKJ, Adalbert Probst, was shot by the Gestapo in 1935.

## Interpretation 1

From *The Nazi Dictatorship*, by Ian Kershaw published in 1985.

The Churches offered less than fundamental resistance to Nazism. Their energies were used in opposing Nazi interference with their traditional practices. This was not matched by equally vigorous denunciation of Nazi inhumanity and barbarism.

What is the view of this interpretation and do you agree?

# How far did Hitler succeed in controlling the Churches?

- He had tried to work with the Christian churches, but ended up in conflict with both.
- He tried to make them both conform to Nazi ideas.
- Like the police and law courts, the churches became 'Nazified'
- Germany was moving closer to a Totalitarian state - (where the government controlled every part of the state; Reichstag, NSDAP, Army, Police, Churches, Schools and the Legal System).

**Nazi religion video**



To Summarise:

**1933** – Concordat with the Roman Catholic Church – Nazis will stay out of religion, Church will stay out of politics

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Pope issued a bull (announcement) called 'With burning anxiety', criticising Nazi policies

**1941** – Cardinal Galen ( a Catholic) criticised the Nazi policy of euthanasia (killing mentally and physically handicapped people). He was so popular that the Nazis were too scared to take any action against him.