

# Martin Bormann's Confidential Memo: National Socialism and Christianity are Irreconcilable (June 6, 1941)

## Abstract

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Martin Bormann (1900–1945) took on the position of Chief of the Party Chancellery in May 1941, succeeding Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess after his flight to England the same year. In this document, a confidential memorandum dated June 6, 1941, Bormann's attacks on the irrationality of the Christian faith are representative of a strongly anti-religious strain that existed within the Nazi party. Here, Bormann describes Christianity as an ancient religion that has rejected the progress made by modern scientific inquiry. Christianity, in his eyes, is naïve and backwards. But Bormann is careful not to reject the Catholic and Protestant Churches entirely. A significant majority of Germans identified as Christians and attended church regularly. Instead, Bormann attacks the historical influence the Church and the Christian faith had held over the German state. By removing this religious influence Nazis saw as connected to Judaism, the new regime could finally realize the state's authority over its subjects.

## Source

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### RELATIONSHIP OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

National Socialist and Christian concepts are irreconcilable. Christian churches build on uncertainty of human beings and attempt to preserve the uncertainty of as wide segments of the population as possible, for only in this way can Christian churches keep their power. As opposed to that, National Socialism is based on scientific fundamentals. Christianity has invariable tenets, which were set up almost 2000 years ago and have crystallized in dogmas incompatible with reality. National Socialism on the other hand must, if it is to fulfill its job in the future, always be organized according to the latest knowledge of scientific research.

Christian churches have always recognized the dangers which threaten their existence on account of exact scientific knowledge and therefore attempt by means of pseudo-science, such as theology is, to suppress or falsify scientific research by means of their dogma. Our National Socialist ideology is far loftier than the concepts of Christianity, which in their essential points have been taken over from Jewry. For this reason also we do not need Christianity.

No human being would know anything of Christianity if it had not been drilled into him in his childhood by pastors. The so-called dear God in no wise gives knowledge of his existence to young people in advance, but in an astonishing manner in spite of his omnipotence leaves this to the efforts of the pastors. If therefore in the future our youth learns nothing more of this Christianity, whose doctrines are far below ours, Christianity will disappear by itself.

It is also strange that before the beginning of today's calculation time (calendar) nothing was known of this Christian God and that also since this moment most inhabitants of the earth never learned anything of this Christianity and therefore according to the standard Christian concept were damned from the beginning.

When we National Socialists speak of a belief in God, we do not understand by God, like naive Christians and their spiritual opportunists, a human-type being, who sits around somewhere in the sphere. We must rather open people's eyes to the fact that beside our small universe, highly important in the great universe there are an inconceivably large number of other bodies in the universe, innumerable additional

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bodies, which like the sun are surrounded by planets, and these in turn by smaller bodies, the moons. The force of natural law, with which all these innumerable planets move in the universe, we call the Almighty or God. The claim that this world force is concerned about the fate of every single being, of every smallest earth bacillus, can be influenced by so-called prayers or other astonishing things, is based on a proper dose of naiveté or (however) on a business shamelessness.

As opposed to that, we National Socialists impose on ourselves the demand to live naturally as much as possible, i.e., biologically. The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of nature and of life, the more we adhere to them, so much the more do we conform to the will of the Almighty. The more insight we have into the will of the Almighty, the greater will be our successes.

It follows from the irreconcilability of National Socialist and Christian concepts, that a strengthening of existing confessions and every demand of originating Christian confessions is to be rejected by us. A differentiation between the various Christian confessions is not to be made here. For this reason also the thought of an erection of an evangelical National Church by merger of the various evangelical churches has been definitively given up, because the evangelical church is just as inimical to us as the Catholic Church. Any strengthening of the evangelical church would merely react against us.

It was a historical mistake of the German Emperors in the Middle Ages, that they repeatedly created order at the Vatican in Rome. It is always an error into which we Germans unfortunately fall too often, that we attempt to create order where we would have an interest in disunion and separation. The Hohenstaufens would have had the greatest interest in the disintegration of circumstances of Ecclesiastical power. From the standpoint of the Reich it would have been most favorable if not one pope but at least two, if possible even more popes had existed and mutually fought. Instead of this the German emperors and especially the Hohenstaufens repeatedly looked after order in the church, helped one pope to power over all other rivals, with the success that the emperors, as soon as the pope was again strong enough for it immediately received the first blows from "their" pope. The church however in strengthening its own position of power repeatedly used the particularism of the princes and later of parties and tied it up with all its strength.

In former generations leadership of the people lay exclusively in the hands of the church. The state limited itself to issuing laws and orders and primarily to administering. The real leadership of the people lay not with the state but with the church. The latter exerted via the priest the strongest influence on the life of the individual human being, of families and on the totality (of things). Everything which did not suit the churches was suppressed with unprecedented ruthlessness. For centuries the state by the most various turns granted to the church the possibility of influence. It depended on the church, whether it would help the state or oppose it. The State was reduced to the aid of the church, it was dependent on it. The struggle of the German Emperors against the pope had to fail in the Middle Ages and repeatedly in modern times, because not the emperor, but the church had the leadership of the people in its hand.

This ideological dependence of the state on the church, the yielding of leadership of the people to the church, had become a matter of course, so that nobody dared to oppose seriously here. To consider this not as an incontrovertible fact from the beginning, passed as absurd stupidity until just before the Machtuebernahme [Hitler's rise to power, 1933].

For the first time in German history the Fuehrer consciously and completely has the leadership of the people in his own hand. With the party, its components and attached units the Fuehrer has created for himself and thereby the German Reich leadership an instrument which makes him independent of the church. All influences which might impair or damage the leadership of the people exercised by the Fuehrer with help of the NSDAP, must be eliminated. More and more the people must be separated from the churches and their organs, the pastors. Of course the churches must and will, seen from their viewpoint, defend themselves against this loss of power. But never again must an influence on

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leadership of the people be yielded to the churches. This (influence) must be broken completely and finally.

Only the Reich government and by its direction the party, its components and attached units have a right to leadership of the people. Just as the deleterious influences of astrologers, seers and other fakers are eliminated and suppressed by the state, so must the possibility of church influence also be totally removed. Not until this has happened, does the state leadership have influence on the individual citizens. Not until then are people and Reich secure in their existence for all the future.

We would repeat the mistakes which in past centuries were fatal to the Reich, if we according to the knowledge of our ideological opponents of the Christian confessions were to contribute in any way to the strengthening of one of the various churches. The interest of the Reich lies not in conquering but in preserving and strengthening ecclesiastical particularism.

(signed) M. BORMANN  
Reichsleiter

Source of English translation: "Relationship of National Socialism and Christianity." In United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume VI. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946, Document 075-D, pp. 1036–39. Available online at: [https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363\\_NT\\_Nazi\\_Vol-VI/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-VI/)

Source of original German text: *The Trial of the of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*. Nuremberg, 14. November 1945 – 1. October 1946. Volume XXXV – Official Text English Edition – Documents and Other Material in Evidence, Numbers 039-D to 906-D. Nuremberg, 1947–49, pp. 7–13 [Document 075-D]. Available online at: [https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525338\\_NT\\_Vol-XXXV/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525338_NT_Vol-XXXV/)

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