**The Church in Nazi Germany**

The Church in [Nazi Germany](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Nazi%20Germany.htm) was subjected to as much pressure as any other organisation in Germany. Any perceived threat to [Hitler](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Adolf_Hitler.htm) could not be tolerated - and the churches of Germany potentially presented the Nazis with numerous threats.

In 1933, the Catholic Church had viewed the Nazis as a barrier to the spread of communism from [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/../russia_1917_to_1939.htm). In this year, Hitler and the Catholic Church signed an agreement that he would not interfere with the Catholic Church while the Church would not comment on politics. However, this only lasted until 1937, when Hitler started a concerted attack on the Catholic Church arresting priests etc. In 1937, the pope, Pius XI, issued his "Mit brennender Sorge" statement ("With burning anxiety") over what was going on in Germany. However, there was never a total clampdown on the Catholic Church in Germany. It was a world-wide movement with much international support.

The Protestant Church was really a collection of a number of churches - hence they were easier to deal with. The Protestants themselves were split. The "German Christians" were lead by Ludwig Muller who believed that any member of the church who had Jewish ancestry should be sacked from the church. Muller supported Hitler and in 1933 he was given the title of "Reich Bishop".

Those who opposed the views of Muller were called the "Confessing Church". This was led by Martin Niemoller. He was famous in Germany as he had been a [World War One](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/../index.htm) U-boat captain. Therefore, he was potentially an embarrassing foe to the Nazis. Regardless of this, he was not safe from the [Gestapo](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/heinrich_himmler.htm) who arrested him for opposing Hitler. Niemoller was sent to a concentration camp for 7 years where he was kept in solitary confinement. Many other Confessional Church members suffered the same fate.

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Reich Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich (July 20, 1933)

Although the Catholic Church represented only a third of the German population, the Nazi regime saw it as a particular challenge. On a political level, Catholic interests were traditionally represented by the Center Party. Moreover, as an international institution, the church rested upon a considerable power base. The following Reich Concordat, which was supposed to regulate the relationship between the German Reich and the Catholic Church, was signed by [**representatives of both entities**](http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1894&language=english) on July 20, 1933, and ratified on September 10 of the same year. The Vatican, which sympathized with the Nazi regime’s anti-liberal, anti-Communist stance, hoped that by withdrawing from all political areas it could buy a legal guarantee of its special institutional rights – i.e., self-administration and confessional freedom. Although the Nazi regime had no intention of keeping its contractual obligations, it did appreciate the international prestige this agreement brought and hoped that it would placate the Catholic Church for the time being.

Taken from http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org