Adolf Hitler’s religious beliefs have been a matter of dispute, in part because of apparently inconsistent statements made by and attributed to him. The relationship between Nazism and religion was complex and shifting over the period of the Nazi Party’s existence and during its years in power.

Contents

1 Childhood and youth
2 World War I experiences
3 Views as an adult
   3.1 Public statements
   3.2 Private statements
   3.3 Positive Christianity
   3.4 Islam and eastern religions
   3.5 Religious neutrality
   3.5.1 Hitler’s marriage
   3.6 God, racism and anti-Semitism
   3.7 Hitler and Catholic ritual
   3.8 Adolf Hitler and Ariosophy
4 Notes
5 References
6 External links

Childhood and youth

Adolf Hitler was brought up as a Christian, specifically a Roman Catholic. According to historian Bradley F. Smith, Hitler’s father, though nominally a Catholic, was a freethinker while his mother was a practising Catholic. According to historian Michael Rissmann young Adolf was influenced in school by Pan-Germanism and Darwinism and began to reject the Church and Catholicism, receiving Confirmation only unwillingly. A boyhood friend reports that after Hitler had left home, he never attended Mass or received the Sacraments. Georg Ritter von Schönerer’s writings and the written legacy of his Pan-German Away from Rome! movement which agitated against the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the 19th century may have influenced the young Adolf Hitler.

World War I experiences

Hitler claimed that during the time he served in World War I he had a religious awakening: specifically when he was in the hospital, temporarily blinded from an enemy gas attack in October 1918. This religious awakening may be attributed to a hallucination, possibly induced by a Dr. Forster. Another alleged incident was that a mysterious voice told Hitler to leave a crowded trench during a minor barrage. Moments after he left the area, a shell fell on that particular spot. Hitler saw this experience as a message that made him believe that he was a uniquely illuminated individual who had a special task to fulfill.

Views as an adult

Hitler’s religious beliefs can be gathered from his public and private statements; they present a discrepant picture and some attributed private statements remain disputed and his public statements come from works of propaganda.

Public statements

In public statements, especially at the beginning of his rule, Hitler frequently spoke positively about the Christian heritage of German culture and his belief in the “Aryan” Christ. J.C.Fest wrote, “Hitler knew, through the constant invocation of the God the Lord (German: Herrgott or of providence (German: Vorsehung), to make the impression of a godly way of thought.” He used his “ability to simulate, even to potentially critical Church leaders, an image of a leader keen to uphold and protect Christianity,” according to Ian Kershaw. Kershaw adds that Hitler by this ability also succeeded in appeasing possible Church resistance to anti-Christian Nazi Party radicals. For example, on March 23, 1933, he addressed the Reichstag: “The National Government regards the two Christian confessions (i.e. Catholicism and Protestantism) as factors essential to the soul of the German people. ... We hold the spiritual forces of Christianity to be indispensable elements in the moral uplift of most of the German people. At one point he described his religious status: “I am now as before a Catholic and will always remain so.”

According to Albert Speer Hitler remained a member in good standing of the Catholic church until his suicide, although he also notes that Hitler “had no real attachment to it.” Notable Hitler biographer John Toland writes of Hitler’s religion and its effect: “Still a member in good standing of the Catholic church, he carried within him its teaching that the Jew was the killer of god. The extermination, therefore, could be done without a twinge of conscience since he was merely acting as the avenging hand of god.” Professor Guenter Lewy, author of “The Catholic
According to historian Richard Steigmann-Gall, much is known about Hitler’s views on religion through his book, Mein Kampf.[13] In Mein Kampf, Hitler wrote neither as an atheist, nor an agnostic, nor as a believer in a remote, rationalist divinity; instead he expressed his belief in one providential, active deity:

“What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and the reproduction of our race...so that our people may mature for the fulfillment of the mission allotted by the creator of the universe...Peoples that bastardize themselves, or let themselves be bastardized, sin against the will of eternal Providence.”[12]

In an attempt to justify Nazi intolerance he recommends militanism, which he associates with Christianity’s rise to Roman state religion, as a model for the Nazis in their pursuit of power, while simultaneously lamenting the demise of Pre-Christian Roman Religion.

“The individual may establish with pain today that with the appearance of Christianity the first spiritual terror entered into the far freer ancient world, but he will not be able to contest the fact that since then the world has been afflicted and dominated by this coercion, and that coercion is broken only by coercion, and terror only by terror. Only then can a new state of affairs be constructively created. Political parties are inclined to compromises; philosophies never. Political parties even reckon with opponents; philosophies proclaim their infallibility.”[13]

Elsewhere in Mein Kampf Hitler speaks of the “creator of the universe” and “eternal Providence.” He also states his belief that the Aryan race was created by God, and that it would be a sin to dilute it through racial intermixing. Hitler writes:

“The folkish-minded man, in particular, has the sacred duty, each in his own denomination, of making people stop just talking superficially of God's will, and actually fulfill God's will, and not let God's word be desecrated. For God's will gave men their form, their essence and their abilities. Anyone who destroys His work is declaring war on the Lord's creation, the divine will.”

According to Steigmann-Gall, Hitler’s referce to God as the “Lord of Creation” and the necessity of obeying “His will” along with serveral references to Jesus, reveals the infusion of Christianity into his thinking. Other sources also show Hitler’s Christian thinking, according to Steigmann-Gall. He notes an unpublished manuscript where Hitler sketched out his world-view with similar Christian references, and he gives as an example a speech on April 1922 where Hitler said that Jesus was “the true God”. Finally, Steigmann-Gall gives another example where in a private Nazi meeting Hitler again stated the centrality of Jesus’ teachings to the Nazi movement.

In an attempt to justify Nazi intolerance he recommends militanism, which he associates with the rise of Christianity over the old pagan religions. He referred to Christianity as “the first spiritual terror”, as a model for the Nazis in their pursuit of power, while simultaneously lamenting the demise of what he calls “the far freer ancient world” before Christianity.[14]

Private statements

Hitler’s private statements about Christianity are largely negative. Hitler’s intimates, Goebbels, Speer, and Bormann, report many such statements, although the historical validity of some remarks has been questioned, particularly the collection called Table Talk. Although most historians consider it a useful source, they do not regard it as wholly reliable. Ian Kershaw makes clear the questionable nature of Table Talk as a source.[15] However, although Kershaw recommends treating the work with caution, he does not suggest dispensing with it altogether. Richard Carrier goes further, contending that certain portions of Table Talk, especially those regarding Hitler’s hatred of Christianity, are inventions.[16]

There is less controversy about other statements. Joseph Goebbels notes in a diary entry in 1939: “The Führer is deeply religious, but deeply anti-Christian. He regards Christianity as a symptom of decay.” Albert Speer reports a similar statement: “You see, it’s been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why didn’t we have the religion of the Japanese, who regard sacrifice for the Fatherland as a model for the Nazis in their pursuit of power, while simultaneously lamenting the demise of what he calls “the far freer ancient world” before Christianity.”

Positive Christianity

In contrast to other Nazi leaders, Hitler did not adhere to esoteric ideas, occultism, or Nazi mysticism, and even ridiculed such beliefs in private and possibly in public.[13] Drawing on higher criticism and some branches of theologially liberal Protestantism, Hitler advocated Positive Christianity, traditional Christianity purged of everything that he found objectionable. Hitler never directed his attacks on Jesus himself,[13] but viewed traditional Christianity as a corruption of the original ideas of Jesus, whom Hitler regarded as an Aryan opponent of the Jews.[13] In Mein Kampf Hitler writes that Jesus “made no secret of his attitude toward the Jewish people, and whenever necessary he even took the whip to drive from the temple of the Lord this adversary of all humanity, who then as always saw in religion nothing but an instrument for his business existence. In return, Christ was nailed to the cross.” Hitler rejected the idea of Jesus’ redemptive suffering, stating in 1927:

“My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God’s truth! was greatest not as a sufferer but as a fighter.”

As Protestantism was more open to reinterpretations, especially Positive Christianity, and a non-
fought each other for survival as depicted by Hitler did not believe in a "remote, rationalist divinity" but in an "active deity," a Supreme Being which for example was part of the political system of the Soviet Union, but he nevertheless desired a religiously neutral state system, at least during the years of his dictatorship. [35] He feared the political power that the churches had, and did not want to openly antagonize that political base until he had securely gained control of the country. Once in power Hitler showed his contempt for religion and sought to eliminate it from areas under his rule. [36] Within Hitler's Nazi Party some atheists were quite vocal especially Baldur von Schirach, Arthur Axmann and Martin Bormann. From Hitler's promotion of declared atheists within his party and his use of Muslim sympathizers in his army, it can be concluded that Hitler in the public realm tolerated different religious opinions, ranging from atheist to Islam to Christianity, as long as those people professing these different creeds would support the Nazi regime. Hitler often used religious speech and religious opinions, ranging from atheist to Providence, to guide them or manipulate them. [37] Hitler often used religious speech and religious opinions, ranging from atheist to Providence, to guide them or manipulate them. [37] In 1998 documents were released by Cornell University from the Nuremberg Trials that revealed Nazi plans to exterminate Christianity at the end of World War II. The documents cover the Nuremberg trials of leading Nazis and demonstrate the deliberate genocide of Jews during the Holocaust, in which some six million Jews were killed. One senior member of the U.S. prosecution team, General William Donovan, as part of his work on documenting Nazi war crimes, compiled large amounts of documentation that the Nazis also planned to systematically destroy Christianity. [38]

Donovan's documents include almost 150 bound volumes currently stored at Cornell University after his death in 1959, these documents state

"Important leaders of the National Socialist party would have liked to meet this situation [church influence] by complete expropriation of Christianity and the substitution of a purely racial religion," said an OSS report in July 1945. "The best evidence now available as to the existence of an anti-Church plan is to be found in the systematic nature of the persecution itself.

They also show the different steps involved in the persecution, including the campaign to suppress denominational and youth organizations, denominational schools, and the use of defamation against the clergy, orchestrated to start on the same day over the Reich and supported by the press, Nazi Party meetings and by traveling party speakers. The documents show that the Nazis early on wanted the churches neutralized because they feared that the Churches would oppose Nazi plans based on racism and aggressive wars. The Nazis planned to infiltrate churches and use defamation, arrest and assault or the killing of pastors plus the re-education of church congregations. They also suppressed denominational schools and Christian youth organizations.

Islam and eastern religions
Among eastern religions, Hitler described religious leaders such as Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed as providers of "spiritual sustenance." In this context, Hitler's connection to Mohammad Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem — which included asylum in 1941, the honorary rank of a SS Major, and a "respected racial genealogy" — has been interpreted more as a sign of respect than political expedience. Hitler's choice of the Swastika as the Nazis' main and official symbol, was linked to the belief in the Aryan cultural descent of the German people. They considered the early Aryans of India to be the prototypical white invaders and the sign as a symbol of the Aryan master race.

Religious neutrality
Hitler was opposed to state atheism, which for example was part of the political system of the Soviet Union, but he nevertheless desired a religiously neutral state system, at least during the years of his dictatorship. He feared the political power that the churches had, and did not want to openly antagonize that political base until he had securely gained control of the country. Once in power Hitler showed his contempt for religion and sought to eliminate it from areas under his rule. Within Hitler's Nazi Party some atheists were quite vocal especially Baldur von Schirach, Arthur Axmann and Martin Bormann. From Hitler's promotion of declared atheists within his party and his use of Muslim sympathizers in his army, it can be concluded that Hitler in the public realm tolerated different religious opinions, ranging from atheist to Islam to Christianity, as long as those people professing these different creeds would support the Nazi regime. Hitler often used religious speech and symbolism in his propaganda to appease and promote Nazism to those that he feared would be disposed to act against him. The Soviet Union feared that if they commenced a program of persecution against religion in the western regions, Hitler would use that as a pretext for war.

HITLER'S MARRIAGE
On April 29, 1945, Hitler and Eva Braun chose to marry only in front of a civil servant of the city of Berlin and chose not to hold any religious service or blessing ceremony for their marriage. His mistress and later wife, Eva Braun once said to Hitler during the last days before the fall of Berlin and the Reich Chancellery: "I can't understand how all this can have happened, it's enough to make one lose one's faith in God!" This may indicate, that at least Braun herself still clung to belief in one Supreme Being.

God, racism and anti-Semitism
Hitler did not believe in a "remote, rationalist divinity" but in an "active deity," which he frequently referred to as "Creator" or "Providence." In Hitler's belief God created a world in which different races fought each other for survival as depicted by Arthur de Gobineau. The "Aryan race," supposedly the...
"What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and the reproduction of our race ... so that our people may mature for the fulfillment of the mission allotted it by the creator of the universe. ... Peoples that bastardize themselves, or let themselves be bastardized, sin against the will of eternal Providence."[43]

The Jews he viewed as enemies of all civilization and as materialistic, unspiritual beings, writing in Mein Kampf: "His life is only of this world, and his spirit is inwardly as alien to true Christianity as his nature two thousand years previous was to the great founder of the new doctrine." Hitler described his supposedly divine mandate for his anti-Semitism: "Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."

In his rhetoric Hitler also fed on the old accusation of Jewishicide. Because of this it has been speculated that Christian anti-Semitism influenced Hitler's ideas, especially such works as Martin Luther and His Times and Their Lies and the writings of Paul de Lagardère. Others disagree with this view.[44] In support of this view, Hitler biographer John Toland opines that Hitler "carried within him its teaching that the Jew was the killer of God. The extermination, therefore, could be done without a twinge of conscience since he was merely acting as the avenging hand of god..." Nevertheless, in Mein Kampf Hitler writes of an upbringing in which no particular anti-Semitic prejudice prevailed. Hitler wrote of no apparent anti-Semitism either in his family unit nor being expressed by the Catholic Church of his childhood.

According to American historian Lucy Dawidowicz, Anti-Semitism has a long history within Christianity, and that the line of "anti-Semitic descent" from Luther to Hitler is "easy to draw." In her The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945, she writes that Luther, and Hitler were obsessed by the "demonologized universe" inhabited by Jews. Dawidowicz states that the similarities between Luther's anti-Jewish writings and modern Anti-Semitism are no coincidence, because they derived from a common history of Judenhass, which can be traced to Haman's advice to Ahasuerus. Although modern German Anti-Semitism also has its roots in German nationalism, Christian Anti-Semitism, she writes, is a foundation that was laid by the Roman Catholic Church and "upon which Luther built."[45]

**Hitler and Catholic ritual**

In his childhood, Hitler had admired the pomp of Catholic ritual and the hierarchical organisation of the clergy. Later, he drew on these elements, organizing his party along hierarchical lines and including liturgical forms into events or using phraseology taken from hymns. Because of these liturgical elements, Hitler's Messiah-like status and the ideology's all-encompassing nature, the Nazi movement is sometimes termed a "political religion"[46] Hitler, himself, however, strongly rejected the idea that Nazism was in any way a religion.

**Adolf Hitler and Ariosophy**

Hitler's contact to Lanz von Liebenfels makes it necessary to examine how far his religious views were influenced by Ariosophy, an esoteric movement in Germany and Austria that flourished from the 1890s to the 1920s. [Whether Ariosophy is to be classified as Germanic paganism or Occultism is a different question.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariosophy) The seminal work on Ariosophy, The Occult Roots of Nazism by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, devotes its last chapter the topic of Ariosophy and Adolf Hitler. Not at least due to the difficulty of sources, historians disagree about the importance of Ariosophy for Hitler's religious views. As noted in the foreword of The Occult Roots of Nazism by Rohan Butler, Goodrick-Clarke is not the last word in ascertaining the influence of Lanz von Liebenfels on Hitler than Joachim Fest in his biography of Hitler.[47] A Hitler biography by John Toland that appeared in 1992 reprints a poem that Hitler allegedly wrote while serving in the German Army on the Western Front in 1915.[48] This poem includes references to magical runes and the pre-Christian Germanic deity Woden, but it is mentioned neither by Goodrick-Clarke nor by Fest.

While he was in power, Hitler was definitely less interested in the occult or the esoteric than other Nazi leaders. Unlike Himmler and Rudolf Hess, for example, Hitler had no interest in Astromancy. Nevertheless, Hitler is the most important figure in the Modern Mythology of Nazi occultism. There are tele documentaries about this topic, with the titles Hitler and the Occult and Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail.[49]

Comparing him to Ludendorff, Fest writes: "Hitler had detached himself from such affection, in which he encountered the obscurantism of his early years, Lanz v. Liebenfels and the Thule Society, again, long ago and had, in Mein Kampf, formulated his scathing contempt for that völkisch romanticism, which however his own cosmos of imagination preserved rudimentarily."[50] Fest refers to the following passage from Mein Kampf:

"The characteristic thing about these people [modern-day followers of the early Germanic religion] is that they rave about the old Germanic heroism, about dim prehistory, stone axes, spear and shield, but in reality are the greatest cowards that can be imagined. For the same people who brandish scholarly imitations of old German tin swords, and wear a dressed bearskin with bull's horns over their heads, preach for the present nothing but struggle with spiritual weapons, and run away as fast as they can from every Communist blackjack."[51]

It is not clear if this statement is an attack at anyone specific. It could have been aimed at Carl Harrer or at the Strasser group. According to Goodrick-Clarke, "In any case, the outburst clearly implies Hitler's contempt for conspiratorial circles and occult-racist studies and his preference for direct activism."[52] Hitler also said something similar in public speeches.[53]

Older literature states that Hitler had no intention of instituting worship of the ancient Germanic gods in contrast to the beliefs of some other Nazi officials.[54] In Hitler's Table Talk, one can find this quote:

"It seems to me that nothing would be more foolish than to re-establish the worship of Wotan. Our old mythology ceased to be viable when Christianity implanted itself. Nothing dies unless it is
According to an online article from the Simon Wiesenthal Center[^56], the influence of the anti-Judaic, Gnostic, and root race teachings of H. P. Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, and the adaptations of her ideas by her followers, constituted a popularly unacknowledged but decisive influence over the developing mind of Hitler.

**Notes**

1. Closely related to his support of education was his tolerant skepticism concerning religion. He looked upon religion as a series of conventions and as a crutch for human weakness, but, like most of his neighbors, he insisted that the women of his household fulfill all religious obligations. He restricted his own participation to donning his uniform to take his proper place in festivals and processions. As he grew older Alois shifted from relative passivity in his attitude toward the power and influence of the institutional Church to a firm opposition to "clericalism," especially when the position of the Church came into conflict with his views on education." - Bradley F. Smith: Adolf Hitler: His Family, Childhood and Youth Stanford/California, 1967 p. 27

2. Historian Bradley F. Smith: "Alois insisted she attend regularly as an expression of his belief that the woman's place was in the kitchen and in church.... Happily, Klara really enjoyed attending services and was completely devoted to the faith and teachings of Catholicism, so her husband's requirements worked to her advantage. "Bradley F. Smith: Adolf Hitler: His Family, Childhood and Youth Stanford/California, 1967 p. 42


4. Los-von-Rom-Bewegung Von Schönerer influenced Austrian German nationalists deeply according to historians.

5. Toland 1976, pp. XI-XVI


7. "Hitler wusste selber durch die ständige Annäherung des >Hererrgots< oder der >Vorsorgungen< den Eindruck gottesfürchtiger Denkort zu machen." J.C. Fest, Hitler (German edition), p. 581

8. Kershaw 1987, p. 109 "Hitler's evident ability to simulate, even to potentially critical Church leaders, an image of a leader keen to uphold and protect Christianity was crucial to the mediation of such an image to the church-going public by influential members of both major denominations. It was the reason why church-going Christians, so often encouraged by their 'opinion-leaders' in the Church hierarchies, were frequently able to exclude Hitler from their condemnation of the anti-Christ Party radicals, continuing to see in him the last hope of protecting Christianity from Bolshevism."

9. quoted by Dennis Barton [7]


11. Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich, p. 96


14. Hitler 1926, ch. 5


18. Online copy of the Hossbach memorandum

19. "We will not allow mysteriously-minded occult folk with a passion for exploring the secrets of the world beyond to steal into our Movement. Such folk are not National Socialists, but something else—in any case something which has nothing to do with us." (Speech in Nuremberg on 6 September 1938)

20. Steigmann-Gall 2003, p. 255


22. Baynes 1942, pp. 19-20

23. Steigmann-Gall 2003, p. 84


25. Steigmann-Gall 2003, p. 260


27. Shirer 1960, pp. 234-36


29. Claire, Hulme; Salter, Michael. The Nazi’s persecution of religion as a war crime: The OSS’s response within the Nuremberg Trials Process. Rutgers University.


32. Angebert 1974, p. 246


35. Zippy 1965, p. 225

36. Minier 2003, p. 54

37. Thomsett 1997, pp. 54-55

38. Hart, Hart & Hughes 2000

39. Westerlund 1999, p. 319

40. Norman 1996, p. 975

41. Sage 2006, pp. 154-60. He also used religion as a pretext in diplomatics.

42. De George & Scantlan 1975 pp. 116-117

43. Steigmann-Gall 2003, p. 26

44. Shirer 1965, pp. 91-236 argues that Luther's essay was influential. This view was expounded by Lucy Dawidowicz (Dawidowicz 1996, p. 23). Uwe Siemon-Netto disputes this conclusion (Siemon-Netto 1995, pp. 17-20).
References

- Hitler, Adolf (1926), Mein Kampf, vol. 2.

External links

- An English translation of Mein Kampf.
- Adolf Hitler
  - Politics: Political beliefs, Speeches, Mein Kampf, Zweites Buch, Last will and testament
  - Events: Rise to power, Third Reich, Holocaust, World War II, Death
  - Personal life: Home, Medical health, Religious beliefs, Sexuality, Vegetarianism
  - Family: Eva Braun (wife), Alois (father), Klara (mother), Alois (half-brother), Angela (half-sister), Gustav (brother), Ida (sister), Otto (brother), Edmund (brother), Paula (sister)
Statements by Adolf Hitler (20 April 1889 – 30 April 1945) on the subjects of God, religion, and the Churches. Ralph Manheim, ed. (1998). Mein Kampf. New York: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0395951054. Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord. (p. 65). Adolf Hitler's religious beliefs have been a matter of dispute, in part because of apparently inconsistent statements made by and attributed to him. The relationship between Nazism and religion was complex and shifting over the period of the Nazi Party's existence and during its years in power. Childhood and youth. Adolf Hitler was brought up as a Roman Catholic. According to historian Bradley F. Smith, Hitler's father, though nominally a Catholic, was a freethinker. "Closely related to his support of education was his tolerant skepticism concerning religion. He loo We also know that Hitler some of his associates were obsessed with Teutonic pagan mythology. Whether he took those beliefs seriously, or just saw them as symbolic of German history and heritage is a matter of speculation. In a largely Christian continent, it was politically convenient to give lip service to Christianity in public, but there's little evidence that he believed in God personally. He certainly didn't appear to be motivated by anything higher than his own ambitions and vision for Germany's future. One commentator put it best: "Hitler certainly believed in God, i