

Free Christians for the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount in All Cultures Worldwide

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The Unconscionable Exploitation of the State by the Churches

Economizing is called for everywhere, also in Germany. But where should we start? Several German politicians have finally woken up and, in terms of economizing, they are thinking of the overly wealthy churches. This was reported in the latest issue of the German news magazine "Spiegel." What one should know about this: The German state gives the churches annual subsidies amounting to about 14 billion Euros. And this, even though 40% of all Germans have nothing to do with the two mainstream churches (Catholic and Lutheran). Tax exemptions and fees alone that the churches have negotiated for themselves amount to about 2 billion Euros. The various German states bring in approximately 500 million Euros for the salaries of bishops, pastors, priests and other clerics as well as the financing of purely internal church facilities.

That the German taxpayer finances a carefree life for church personnel while the German state does without billions in taxes for the benefit of ecclesiastical facilities is until today justified, mantra-like, by an event that took place over 200 years ago: secularization. Napoleon had ordered a restructuring of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. The imperial princes lost their territories west of the Rhine river and were reimbursed with church estates on the east side. In return, they were obligated to take responsibility for the permanent fixtures and furnishings of the cathedrals and the pensions of suspended clergy.

This has turned into an endless story. Agreements made at the beginning of the 19th century became concordats and church contracts at the beginning of the 20th century. They were augmented and expanded, and benefit after benefit piled up, even in the new German states in East Germany, where the churches have practically disappeared. Even the fathers of the Constitution of the Weimar Republic wanted to put an end to it in 1919. And the fathers and mothers of the German Constitution also wanted to do this in 1949. But until now, the pertinent laws have not been passed. The German politicians did not dare to touch the ecclesiastical benefice. They determined that state payments to the church must be paid off by law. But until now such a law has failed to materialize.

It was said that to pay off old governmental obligations would be too expensive. And the concordat and the church contracts cannot be terminated. **“Pure excuses,”** was the comment today by attorney Christian Sailer, who in March of this year filed a constitutional complaint against the inactivity of the lawmakers. **“The losses caused by secularization were compensated twofold and threefold over the course of the last 200 years. That the state is still paying for this is a massive violation of the constitution. The old payments should not even have been extended or replaced by new contracts after 1919.”**

The church-critical organization “Free Christians for the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount” now asks the politicians: Do you want to keep paying the clergy an “eternal pension”? Is the church bureaucracy, which the faithful are turning away from in droves, still more important to you than social justice for the employed and families with several children? Why don't you demand of the churches that they finance themselves, instead of immorally exploiting the state? For it is unconscionable to insist on contracts of eternal duration. Since the basis for negotiations of government reimbursements lapsed long ago, the state can cancel the old agreements at any time. In fact, it even must do so – in the interest of justice and the common good.

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