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# Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust

EDITED BY

Kevin P. Spicer, C.S.C.

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## CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	KEVIN P. SPICER	ix
<i>Introduction: Love Thy Neighbor?</i>	JOHN T. PAWLIKOWSKI AND KEVIN P. SPICER	xiii

### I. Theological Antisemitism

1 Belated Heroism: The Danish Lutheran Church and the Jews, 1918–1945	THORSTEN WAGNER	3
2 Rabbinic Judaism in the Writings of Polish Catholic Theologians, 1918–1939	ANNA ŁYSIAK	26
3 German Catholic Views of Jesus and Judaism, 1918–1945	ROBERT A. KRIEG	50
4 Catholic Theology and the Challenge of Nazism	DONALD J. DIETRICH	76

### II. Christian Clergy and the Extreme Right Wing

5 Working for the Führer: Father Dr. Philipp Haeuser and the Third Reich	KEVIN P. SPICER	105
6 The Impact of the Spanish Civil War upon Roman Catholic Clergy in Nazi Germany	BETH A. GRIECH-POELLE	121
7 Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church	PAUL A. SHAPIRO	136

### III. Postwar Jewish-Christian Encounters

8 The German Protestant Church and Its <i>Judenmission</i> , 1945–1950	MATTHEW D. HOCKENOS	173
9 Shock, Renewal, Crisis: Catholic Reflections on the Shoah	ELIAS H. FÜLLENBACH	201

### IV. Viewing Each Other

10 Wartime Jewish Orthodoxy's Encounter with Holocaust Christianity	GERSHON GREENBERG	237
11 Confronting Antisemitism: Rabbi Philip Sidney Bernstein and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy	SUZANNE BROWN-FLEMING	270

12 Old Wine in New Bottles? Religion and Race in Nazi Antisemitism	RICHARD STEIGMANN-GALL	285
<i>List of Contributors</i>		309
<i>Index</i>		313

## PREFACE

KEVIN P. SPICER

The scholars whose essays appear in this volume met at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in the summer of 2004 for a workshop about the Holocaust and antisemitism in Christian Europe. Our goal was to examine how the legacy of antisemitism within the Christian churches limited the ability of their clergy and laity to critique National Socialism as evil and unequivocally condemn it.

The Center's workshops provide a unique experience for researchers to gather together outside the confines of their regular college or university milieu and to devote two weeks solely to examining a shared interest. Before the workshop began, each participant prepared an original essay based on primary source material, which we shared with one another. Over the course of the two weeks, we devoted approximately two and a half hours to in-depth discussion of the content of each paper. At the end of our time together, each of us agreed to revise his or her paper for publication. The essays in this volume are the product of this introspective process.

The contributors to this volume agree that the study of the historical and theological basis for antisemitism remains paramount today, as the recent controversy over Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* made clear.<sup>1</sup> It is the responsibility of contemporary scholarship to inform present and future generations of students, scholars, and the broader population about antisemitism's subtleties and intrinsic evils. Through their research, responsible historians and theologians encourage the Christian churches to continue to observe carefully the roles that antisemitism has played and continues to play in their history, theology, and liturgical worship. Although an ever-growing body of literature deals with the study of antisemitism, scholars of Christian and Jewish studies have, until recently, kept a strict but misleading separation between Nazi "racial antisemitism" and "Christian antisemitism."<sup>2</sup>