

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

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Editors' Introduction

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Welcome to the second volume of STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS. The editors are delighted by the interest raised by the publication of Volume 1 from both the scholarly and student communities. The accessibility of this e-journal enables a wide readership and we are grateful to our editorial board and colleagues at the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations for their encouragement and support.

The feature topic in this first issue of Volume 2 considers the significance of the life and writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45) to Christian-Jewish relations. Many of the papers and conference proceedings presented originate from a conference DIETRICH BONHOEFFER FOR OUR TIMES: JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES, co-sponsored by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Hebrew College, and the Andover-Newton Theological School. Much remains to be done in the examination of the years 1933-1945 and it is tempting to focus on what Dr. Kevin Spicer in his recent study of the role of the Catholic Church has called, a "saints and sinners" approach that does not accurately portray what happened. The editors hope this temptation has been avoided and are pleased to offer a range of scholarly opinions on Bonhoeffer. Many of the issues that are raised remain a key feature of Christian-Jewish relations today.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Protestant pastor and theologian, who was known for his opposition to Hitler and hanged for involvement in the 1944 assassination attempt. He helped form the Confessing Church, which resisted state interference in Church life, and exploited ecumenical contacts on behalf of the resistance. His attitude towards Jews and Judaism is the subject of much controversy, demonstrated by a variety of scholarly opinions over the Bonhoeffer's 1933 essay "The Church and the Jewish Question." As the articles in this issue show, his writings are

not always consistent but they do suggest development in his views. In his *Ethics* he wrote "the Jew keeps open the question of Christ," implying that the continuing existence of Judaism was essential to the continuance of Christianity. Contemporary debate turns on whether Bonhoeffer is to be regarded as part of the problem Jewish-Christian relations must resolve or is one of the few theologians who made future dialogue possible.

We would like to thank managing editor Dr. Audrey Doetzel, NDS, for her work in assembling this issue's feature topic materials.

In addition to the discussion on Bonhoeffer, readers will notice a response to Dr. Jon Levenson's article, "Can Catholicism Validate Jewish Biblical Interpretation?" published in the last volume. Dr Henry Wansbrough, a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which composed *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* in 2001, offers an insightful critique of Levenson's article. The editors are keen to encourage scholarly responses to articles in the e-journal in order to foster discussion and debate in the field of Christian-Jewish relations. We welcome such contributions.

Finally, readers of the book reviews will notice that Dr. Ruth Langer has become our new Reviews Editor and we are grateful for her willingness to take on this role. We also acknowledge with thanks the contributions to the first volume of Drs Helen Spurling and Emmanouela Grypeou from Cambridge University and Dr. David Sandmel from Catholic Theological Union. This issue offers readers a number of reviews of key publications in the ever-growing field of Christian-Jewish relations.