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Exclusive Space as a Criterion for Salvation in German Protestantism during the Third Reich

Recent years have witnessed an expansion in the use of spatial conceptions for historical analysis.[1] In the fields of Study of Religion and Theology specifically, researchers such as Kim Knott have introduced 'space' as an analytical category.[2] This term is distinctly polysemic, encompassing, in the religious arena, physical space such as a church, mosque, or synagogue; geographic space such as a region or country; but also social space, perhaps a Baptist women's choir or a Protestant congregation. In a broad sense, the first two areas, that is, physical and geographical, might be perceived as constructed space, and the third by its content. Our Baptist women's choir, for instance, is a space in which women of Baptist belief meet in order to sing together. Thus, we already note a certain exclusivity by which entry into this space is governed: one must be a woman, wish to sing, and adhere to the Baptist faith in order to belong.

Our Baptist women's choir, however, is still not an 'exclusive space,' as its boundaries are permeable. It would be possible for this choir to accept men into its ranks, perhaps because there was no men's choir available for those who would like to sing in a group. It would also be possible that the choir numbers among its members someone who does not sing, but performs administrative duties for the group. Furthermore, it would be possible to include non-Baptist members if appropriate, say, for inter-religious projects.

In what follows, the term 'exclusive space' will extend the spatial conception regarding religion to the feature of 'race' (race referring to a racist categorization of humans). For this purpose, 'exclusive space' is to be understood in the sense that only a specific group of individuals ever has access to it. 'Outsiders' can never enter this 'exclusive space.' In this context, then, space becomes a social

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1 For a research overview, see Christoph Bernhardt, "Governance, Statehood, and Space in 20th Century Political Struggles. An Introduction," Historical Social Research 42 (2017): 199–217.
2 For example, the articles in Journal of Religion in Europe 9 (2016), issue 4; András Máté-Tóth and Cosima Rughiniş, eds., Spaces and borders: Current Research on Religion in Central and Eastern Europe (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011); Lise Paulsen Galal et al., "Middle Eastern Christian Spaces in Europe: Multi-sited and Super-diverse," Journal of Religion in Europe 41 (2016): 1–25; Thomas Erne and Peter Schüz, eds., Die Religion des Raumes und die Räumlichkeit der Religion (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

construction that coheres with the sociological approach of spatial conception, as, for example, Kim Knott has discussed in her work on boundaries in different religious spheres.

For Knott, "it is boundaries – themselves constructed and invested with meaning – that define containers and position people and objects, that generate margins, and encourage, permit or prohibit crossings. Insides and outsides [...] are themselves constituted by boundaries."[3] As such, the boundary is the decisive criterion for constructing spaces.

The interior, or space, then, is not characterized primarily by its content, but rather by its boundaries. This boundary building process features built-in differentiation. To take a simple example, we might consider the insider and the outsider, that is, those who belong within the space – or those permitted to enter it – and those who do not belong within or are not permitted to enter it.[4] Defining space in this way not only makes it possible to clarify who belongs to the in-group, but also the definition of the actual in-group using this mechanism. By excluding 'others,' criteria are presented to the in-group which must be fulfilled in order to belong. In this indirect way, the in-group is defined by the 'others.'[5]

Recalling our Baptist women's choir, we have an example of a space defined by boundaries (it is, after all, a *Baptist women's* choir) which are somewhat porous. In the present article, I discuss a space that did not evolve naturally,[6] but, like countries or buildings, was constructed intentionally with exclusive entry criteria. In this respect, one might think of a popular club, in which entrance selection is made on the basis of style, appearance, social status, or connections.

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3 Kim Knott, "Inside, Outside and the Space in-between: Territories and Boundaries in the Study of Religion," Temenos: Nordic Journal of Contemporary Religion 44 (2008): 41–66, here at 45.

4 Ibid., 44.

5 For this mechanism as expressed in the example of national identities, see Elfie Rembold and Peter Carrier, "Space and Identity: Constructions of National Identities in an Age of Globalization," National Identities 13 (2011): 361–77, esp. 362–5. And see Oliver Zimmer, "Boundary Mechanisms and Symbolic Resources: Towards a Process-oriented Approach to National Identity," Nations and Nationalism 9 (2003): 173–93. During the nineteenth century it was important for Catholics and Protestants for the own identity to refer at the differences between the own confession and the 'other'; see Anthony J. Steinhoff, "Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter? Nachdenken über die Religion im langen 19. Jahrhundert," Geschichte und Gesellschaft 30 (2004): 549–70, here at 561.

6 For the so-called 'Borderscapes Concept' as a dynamic social process, see Chiara Brambilla, "Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept," Geopolitics 20 (2015): 14–34. For a critical overview on Borderscapes, see Elena Dell'agnese and Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, "Introduction. Borderscapes: From Border Landscapes to Border Aesthetics," Geopolitics 20 (2015): 4–13.

In the article, I try to connect this mechanism of inclusion – or rather, exclusion – to religion. Specifically, I discuss defining race as the criterion for accessing a particular form of religion which then crafted a distinct pattern of exclusion.

Race as a Boundary for Religious Salvation

Let us begin by clarifying what is meant by a religiously motivated exclusion based on race. For this purpose, I shall define race and racism, and discuss the grounds on which a racial categorization is made.

George Frederickson defined racism by ethno-cultural differences, which he further characterizes as congenital, indelible, and unchangeable. Here, he is referring to features such as language, traditions, and family relations which are regarded as characteristics of an imaginary collective.[7] To this characterization I would add, as a typical feature of racial concepts, the alleged behavioral patterns of such a constructed collective. By this I refer to persisting ideas such as 'Jewish greed' or 'the inability of Africans to accommodate to western standards.' Fredrickson mentions a further feature of racism, relevant in this context: "Racism is expressed in practices, institutions, and structures which find their alleged justification or validation in the recognition of a group as 'the others.'"[8] In what follows, I will not use the term 'racism' in contexts that admit of the possibility of assimilation. It was from this assimilation that the possibility of conversion within the confines of institutionalized religion evolved.

Boundaries are drawn to differentiate oneself from 'the other.' Hence (national) identity is constructed in the process of defining 'the other,' a particularly relevant point with respect to building group identity. One separates from 'the other' to demarcate the features of one's own or in-group-identity.[9] If these identity boundaries are understood as insuperable due to innate characteristics, we are dealing with a racial – or racist – conceptualization.

To take an obvious example, let us consider skin color. If one is denied access to a group because of his/her skin color, this is racist behavior. It rules out the possibility that 'the other' could ever become part of the 'in-group,' One might even call this racial exclusion on the grounds of innate and irreconcilable barriers.

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7 George M. Fredrickson, Rassismus: Ein historischer Abriß (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2004), 13.

8 Ibid., 13.

9 Rembold and Carrier, "Space and Identity," 361 – 77.

In Nazi Germany, the cohabitation of Germans and Jews was portrayed as impossible. The Jews, here 'the others,' had to be separated from the Germans. These 'racially othered' people were denied access to society: they were actually excluded from being part of society.[10] This concept resurfaced in the apartheid regime in South Africa, and in the former racial restrictions of the U.S. judicial system. Exclusion from social and political participation in the U.S. and South Africa, however, was not directed at religion. The 'racially othered' could participate in the dominant religion of the 'standard culture.' Despite their oppression, American and South African people of color could join the Christian community.

While the American church communities were often in the past divided into Whites and people of color, with separately held services, access to Christianity itself was not denied. Racial exclusion in religion to create an exclusive space, however, is something else again. In what follows, I show that some people in Germany were denied access because of their alleged belonging to a specific race. This meant denial of religious salvation, because such salvation rested on sacraments such as baptism and Communion. Ultimately, this ended in exclusion from the Christian community itself. Only people of the 'right' race were able to receive the holy sacraments and the divine message of the clerical doctrine. There was no avenue for the 'others' to become Christian or to maintain their status. In this way, the space in which religion could be practiced or experienced was defined by race. This racial boundary determined who would partake of religious salvation. The boundary became the distinguishing feature – precisely as Knott presented in her discussion of space in the sphere of religion.[11]

The Creation of an Exclusive Space for Salvation – The German Christian Church Movement and the De-Judaization of Christianity

In the first part of the present article, I drew my examples from Christianity because my empirical case-study, presented below, deals with the realization of the aforementioned racial-religious concept in twentieth- century German Protestantism.

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10 See for example the 'prophet' of the volkish movement in the ninetenth century, Paul de Lagarde (1827–1891) and his position in Ulrich Sieg, Deutschlands Prophet: Paul de Lagarde und die Ursprünge des modernen Antisemitismus (München: Hanser, 2007).
11 Knott, "Inside, Outside and the Space in-between," 56.

In 1927, two young pastors in Thuringia founded a group that later became known as the "German Christian Church Movement" (*Kirchenbewegung Deutsche Christen*). I use the term "German-Christians" to refer specifically to this ideological group, and not to the general population of Christians in Germany. Let me note from the outset that we are not dealing here with an isolated phenomenon mostly found on paper. To be sure, there were several small groups of the so-called volkisch movement in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century that counted no more than 1,000 members. For example, the "German Nobility Society" (*Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft*), established in 1920, featured an "Aryan-paragraph" (*Arier-Paragraph*) that restricted membership in this society to Aryans.[12] But this and similar societies exerted little influence on broader parts of the German society.[13]

The German Christian Church Movement, by contrast, took control of the whole regional church in Thuringia during the church elections in 1933.[14] In the following years, the Movement expanded its ecclesial-political influence to other Protestant regional churches in the Third Reich. By the end of the 1930s, it supervised six Protestant regional churches (*Landeskirchen*) in Nazi Germany, and had forged alliances with other regional churches. The evangelical regional churches, which sympathized with the German Christian Church Movement, adopted its German-Christian conception of religion. This Protestant movement, which was active until 1945, held significant sway over Germany's regional churches.

German-Christian religious doctrine was grounded in the racial subdivision of humankind. Accordingly, it understood the different races as reflecting a divine hierarchical order. This racist doctrine was not only a (scientific) theory; it also formed the basis for German-Christian action:

> First and foremost, the fight against Judaism is an irrevocable command to the German people. This contrast is far-reaching and affects all areas of the German life. For this contrast poses the greatest decision, in religious and ecclesiastical life, within German history. In the question of the possible influence of Judaism or the Jewish spirit on German religious life,

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12 Stefan Breuer, "Der Streit um den 'nordischen Gedanken' in der völkischen Bewegung," Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte 62 (2010), 1–27, here at 17.

13 See Uwe Puschner, Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache – Rasse – Religion (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001). For the so called 'volkisch movement' during the Third Reich, see Uwe Puschner and Clemens Vollnhals, eds., Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus. Eine Beziehungs- und Konfliktgeschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

14 See Oliver Arnhold, "Entjudung" – Kirche im Abgrund, vol. 1: Die Thüringer Kirchenbewegung Deutsche Christen 1928–1939 (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 2010).

and in the question of the elimination of this influence, the indispensable and unavoidable fundamental question of the present German religious situation is posed.[15]

German-Christians believed that they grasped the hierarchical order of the world. 'Miscegenation' and 'Internationalism' were viewed as rebellion against the divine plan. Important factors influencing the effectiveness of the German Christian Church Movement were Protestantism, the interdependence of Christianity (in Germany) and National Socialism, as well as a radical anti-Semitism.[18]

The German Christian Church Movement explicitly sought to impose a second reformation of Protestant Christianity in Germany. As Walter Grundmann (1906–1976), professor of Volkisch Theology and New Testament in Jena/Thuringia and scientific director of the "Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life" (*Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben*),[16] pointed out:

> Let us be clear about this: It seemed impossible to people during Luther's time that one could be Christian without acknowledging the Pope's authority – which for us is a matter of course. Today it seems just as improbable to many of us that one can sustain Christianity and the Church without the sacred-historical reference to the history of the Old Testament [...]. We are convinced that the history of the coming decades will confirm our view [of the German Christians; D.S.].[17]

God often sent holy men to his chosen people – the German-Christians believed these to be Germans. Not surprisingly, they considered Martin Luther to have been the first among these holy men. Protestantism, then, was a German belief system for this church movement. And, rejecting "Jewish influence" on the church, the German-Christians wanted to impose Luther's reformation under the 'Führer' Adolf Hitler, sent by God.

The term 'Germanisation' (*Germanisierung*) refers to a racially motivated concept of religion with an exclusive character. It was directed against Jewish influences and church members who were not 'ethnically German.' Such racial approaches to Christianity were not new: they had been a feature of German

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15 Walter Grundmann, Die Entjudung des religiösen Lebens als Aufgabe Deutscher Theologie und Kirche (Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1939), 9–10.

16 On the Institute, see Susannah Heschel, The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Oliver Arnhold, "Entjudung" – Kirche im Abgrund, vol. 2: Das "Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben" 1939–1945 (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 2010).

17 Grundmann, Die Entjudung des religösen Lebens, 17.

Protestantism since the early twentieth century.[18] In 1914, for example, an evangelical group in Vienna sought to split the Austrian church into a German one and a Slavic one, so that each race would have its own church and organization.[19] But the German Christian Church Movement was the first to connect the idea of a German Christianity with the racist doctrine of a political movement – National Socialism. Hitler was assigned the role of messiah in German-Christian doctrine: "Führer by the grace of God," "Führer, sent by God," "God's instrument," and "German prophet":

> Thus, Adolf Hitler's National Socialism hammers against the last gate, stands in the concealed dark place of every true fighter, stands there – this is completely different and new – as the German people, in order to be forgiven for its sins and to be blessed for its holy world mission. Because his nature is truthful no matter what questions he raises, because he, with an unprecedented passionate fervor, recognizes the eternal Creator's will, he will soon step over the threshold into the kingdom of the last knowledge for the salvation of the world for the next three and four centuries. Then again will be the time when piety is not a disease, not a flight from the world, but health and strength, where one adores and fights and works and sees worship in it. Then history will write: the best National Socialists were also the best Christians, and Adolf Hitler has set the soul of the German people free to meet their Creator and Savior Jesus Christ![20]

This racist doctrine was constitutive of the German-Christians' ideology. "Miscegenation" was seen as a violation of "the order of God." And "biological miscegenation" was just the beginning. Religion, too, was deemed "racially predestined." According to German-Christians, God revealed Himself to people of different nations in different ways, so that every nation would have its own realization of Christianity. As such, for Siegfried Leffler (1900 – 1983), the church can "not circumvent the heavy altercation with the new [National Socialism], if it continues to aim at spreading the enlightened idea of God from within the people, and at illustrating the eternal power of God as Creator to the nation."[21]

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18 At this time, this conception was often combined with the idea that Jesus was not a Jew but an Aryan; see Heschel, The Aryan Jesus, 26 – 66.

19 See Dirk Schuster, Die Lehre vom "arischen" Christentum: Das wissenschaftliche Selbstverständnis im Eisenacher "Entjudungsinstitut" (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017), 48. More examples regarding the topic can be found in the following pages.

20 Siegfried Leffler, "Nationalsozialismus und Christentum," Briefe an Deutsche Christen 1 (1932): 2–4, here at 4. On this topic, see Dirk Schuster, ""Führer von Gottes Gnaden" – Das deutsch-christliche Verständnis vom Erlöser Adolf Hitler," Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte 68 (2016): 277–85.

21 Leffler, "Nationalsozialismus und Christentum," 2.

The political agitation of the German-Christians was not particularly aimed at other Christian confessions in Germany, such as Catholicism. In this, we see that the real restriction of religious salvation was based on racial conception. For the German Christian Church Movement, Protestantism was reserved for members of the Nordic, or Germanic, race. With their international scope, other Christian belief systems, such as world Protestantism and a universal papacy,[22] were deemed 'Jewish' ideas in the eyes of the German-Christians, and anathema to divine creation.[23]

While the German-Christians accused the German Catholics of following a falsified doctrine, introduced by foreign racial influences, the latter were still eligible for religious salvation because of their belonging to the allegedly 'right' race. In this way, German-Christians cherished the idea of bridging the schism of the Christian church in Germany and eventually of uniting all Germans in one "national church" (*Nationalkirche*), based on the concept of race. Faith in the Christian God and the racially constructed membership of the German people were of greater significance in the attainment of salvation than singular confessional voices.

The space in which salvation was a possibility, then, was a racial one. That accounts for why Scandinavians, who had such racial affinity to the 'German Aryan race,' were granted access to salvation by the German Christian Church Movement. This spatial orientation becomes patent in the case of the so-called 'Jewish Christians.'

'Jewish Christians' were individuals who were either converts to Christianity, or Christians with Jewish ancestors who converted to Christianity. Church records (*Kirchenbücher*), the same documents used by the Nazis to determine who was Jewish and who was not, made this differentiation an easy matter. This criterion was a central one for the German-Christian religious doctrine. The German people was regarded as God's chosen people and the German-Christians saw the Germans in a contrary position to the outcast Jewry:

> To have made the thought of race an expression of the feeling of the people is the merit of Adolf Hitler. [...] The question of race has arisen for Adolf Hitler in Judaism. Judaism is not

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22 For the problem of Papacy and Catholicism in the view of the German Christians, see Dirk Schuster, "Papst und Papsttum aus der Perspektive der Kirchenbewegung Deutscher Christen," in Die Päpste und die Protestanten: Begegnungen im modernen Europa, eds. Gerulf Hirt, Silke Satjukow, and David Schmiedel (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2018): 57–78.

23 See, for example, Walter Grundmann, Die Entjudung des religiösen Lebens; Hugo Pich, Frei vom Juden – auch im Glauben! Ein Ruf zur Entjudung von Kirche und Christentum (Sibiu/ Hermannstadt: Krafft & Drotleff, 1943).

first and foremost another religion, but a foreign race that intrudes, that wants racial chaos in order to exercise dominion itself. [24]

No less a figure than Jesus himself, along with the early Christians, were marshalled in the battle against the Jews: according to the German-Christians, it was they who had initiated the struggle in the first place. Furthermore, God revealed Himself in historical figures such as Martin Luther, Frederick the Great, and even Otto von Bismarck. For German-Christians, who saw the revelation of God in historical events, God revealed Himself in German history, which led to the conclusion that Germans were God's chosen people.[25]

For German-Christians, Adolf Hitler had been divinely sent to the German people in their greatest misery. It was the declared goal of this group to complete Luther's unfinished reformation under the God-sent Führer Adolf Hitler. Thus, in 1933, they began to 'liberate' doctrines and liturgy from "alleged Jewish" influences, expanding this practice to the communities under their influence. Immediately after the Nazis dismissed all alleged Jews from the civil service, the German-Christians followed suit in their churches. Importantly, here the term "alleged Jews" does not necessarily refer to an adherent to the Jewish faith. For the most part, people who were thus racially categorized merely had ancestors of Jewish descent. The German-Christians dismissed all such persons, although they were Protestant Christians by confession. They then divided the church community into two groups: Christians and 'Jewish Christians.'[26] They would not permit a 'German' pastor to perform sacred rites such as christenings or Communion on the latter. These Jewish Christians could not pay church taxes because they were no longer perceived as part of the Christian community. The

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24 Walter Grundmann, Religion und Rasse: ein Beitrag zur Frage "nationaler Aufbruch" und "lebendiger Christusglaube" (Werdau: Meister, 1933), 7.

25 For this idea, which does not originate from the German-Christians but rather has been part of Protestant thinking since the nineteenth century, see Hartmut Lehmann, "The Germans as a Chosen People: Old Testament Themes in German Nationalism," in Hartmut Lehmann, Religion und Religiosität in der Neuzeit: Historische Beiträge, eds. Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen and Otto Ulbricht (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 248–59.

26 For example, the regional church of the Palatinate (Pfalz), which had close connections to the German Christian Church Movement, declined a proposition in March 1939, according to which all Jewish Christians were to be excluded from the church. The background to this, however, was that at that time no Jewish Christians were members of the regional church of the Palatinate. Nevertheless, the church leadership emphasized that Christians of Jewish origin were not welcome in the church. Roland Paul, "Antisemitismus und Haltung zur Judenverfolgung," in Protestanten ohne Protest: Die evangelische Kirche der Pfalz im Nationalsozialismus, vol. 1: Sachbeiträge, eds. Christoph Picker et al. (Speyer: Verlagshaus Speyer, 2016), 359–60.

separated Jewish Christian communities were later partly dissolved, and the affected people were expelled from church. But expulsion was not always necessary. These 'Jewish Christians' left of their own accord, emigrated, or became victims of the Holocaust. After the end of the war, the exclusion of Jewish Christians from the Christian community during the Third Reich was criticized in an expert report commissioned by the Protestant regional church of Thuringia. However, the same report also stressed that the Jewish community – albeit not Jewish Christians – posed a danger to Christianity as a whole.[27]

The German-Christians created a religious community that was defined on the one hand as Protestant Christian, and on the other as belonging to the Aryan or Nordic race. The 'Jewish Christians' who lived in the area of influence of the German Christian Church Movement stood no chance of rejoining the Protestant church. The border was precisely their 'racial background.' They were banned from church services, baptism, Communion, and religious instruction. Salvation in Christian terms was not possible for these individuals: only those who belonged to the 'right' race were allowed access.

It is at this point that the demarcation described by Kim Knott becomes obvious: access to salvation was about race, pure and simple. Christenings and Communion are sacraments for Protestants, and fundaments of the faith for religious Christians. Access to these essential religious acts was reserved for those belonging to the supposed right race under the leadership of the German Christian Church Movement, regardless of whether the individual could forgo participation in the Holy Communion according to his or her own individual beliefs. The key point is that access was denied to this ritual completely, if one of these individuals was defined as Jewish or partly Jewish.

Thus far, racial theory could be proclaimed as God's overall plan. One could explain, with recourse to German history, why Adolf Hitler was the supposed 'Führer' sent by God. It was even possible to create religious space(s) to which accessibility and in which the attainment of salvation were defined by race. Yet one hurdle remained: the history of Christianity and its traditions. According to the New Testament, Jesus was a Jew. The German Christian Church Movement, as one of the most influential Protestant groups in the Third Reich, needed to legitimize its racialized conception of religion. It had to provide concrete evidence as to why only Aryans were granted salvation and not, for example, Jewish Christians. Towards this goal, six Protestant regional churches, led by the German Christian Church Movement, founded the "Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life" in 1939. More than

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27 See Schuster, Die Lehre vom "arischen" Christentum, 256–57.

fifty academics contributed to this anti-Semitic research institute, which was aimed at the 'de-Judization' of Christianity. The members of the Institute produced purported evidence in genealogical works on Jesus' parents that the latter had been Jewish from a religious point of view, but could not have been so racially. The research tried to demonstrate Aryan origins in these Galileans. Jesus would then have been at least partly of Aryan descent.[28] And Jesus was supposed to have spearheaded the struggle against Judaism. According to their racial ideology, the Aryan and Jewish races have been at each other's throats since antiquity. All biblical and extra-biblical evidence which depicted Jesus as a Jew was considered falsified by Jews. Besides this alleged evidence of Jesus not being Jewish, the Institute produced a 'Jew-free' (*judenrein*) Christianity for contemporary times. This was an active process to fulfill their aim of finishing Luther's Reformation for a 'Jew-free' Christianity in a 'Jew-free' Third Reich.[29] Relying on publications of the Institute penned by well-known scholars such as Johannes Leipoldt (1880–1965), Carl Schneider (1900–1977), and Hans Heinrich Schaeder (1896–1957), the German Christian Church Movement was able to construct their Aryan Christianity and adduce evidence that Jesus had not been Jewish. Johannes Leipoldt, Professor of New Testament Studies in Leipzig, for example, attested that ancient Judaism accepted non-Jews within its ranks. However, these converts were only Jews by religion, not by race. And the nature of race cannot be altered, irrespective of the particular religion to which an individual adheres. Following this line of thinking, the New Testament scholar positioned Jesus' declarations and actions in direct contrast to the 'nature of the Jew': Jesus preached Christian charity and acted accordingly. Such Christian charity, however, is supposedly foreign to Jews due to their racially determined 'nature.' This is why, according to the Institute scholars, helpfulness always arises from self-interest in Jews, never from conviction.[30] It was for this very reason that Jesus of Nazareth had few followers among Jews. Ancient Greece, by contrast, which Leipoldt declared as belonging to the "Aryan race,"

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28 See, for example, Walter Grundmann, Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum, 2nd edition (Leipzig: G. Wigand, 1941); Johannes Leipoldt, Jesu Verhältnis zu Griechen und Juden (Leipzig: G. Wigand, 1941).

29 Dirk Schuster: "Die Kirchenbewegung Deutsche Christen und die "Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses". Ein aktiver Prozess zur Gestaltung des "Dritten Reiches"," in Judentum und Antisemitismus in Europa, ed. Ulrich A. Wien (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017): 247–78.

30 Johannes Leipoldt, "Jesus und das Judentum," in Christentum und Judentum: Studium zur Erforschung ihres gegenseitigen Verhältnisses. Erster Band. Sitzungsberichte der ersten Arbeitstagung des Instituts zur Erforschung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben vom 1. bis 3. März 1940 in Wittenberg, ed. Walter Grundmann (Leipzig: G. Wigand, 1940): 45–6.

"feels an intrinsic kinship with Jesus, considers his teachings and develops them further."[31]

Such publications – as well as those by Walter Grundmann, who allegedly found genealogical evidence that Jesus was not a Jew but "Aryan"[32] – formed the basis for the separation of Judaism and Christianity on a racial footing. If Jesus himself was not Jewish but rather struggled against Judaism on the grounds of racial differences between Jews and 'Aryans,' then contemporary Christianity must be cleansed of all Jewish influences and 'elements.' Carl Schneider, Professor of New Testament Studies in Königsberg, even attempted to present anti-Semitism as the central message of early Christianity. According to him, the struggle against Judaism was one of the main motives of Jesus of Nazareth. Schneider explained Jesus' purported animus towards the Jews by resorting once again to race: Jesus was a "full-blooded Aryan" in line with National Socialist racial ideology.[33] Thus, claimed Schneider, Christianity in the 'Third Reich' ought to be at the forefront of the fight against Judaism; after all, it had been involved in a racial conflict against 'the Jews' for the past 2,000 years.

Conclusion

The term 'space' can be used to refer to religion in a geographical or social way – of course there are many more possibilities. Regarding social space, it can be said that this is primarily negotiated by the action of agents, "[...] through the linking of the elements of social commodities and living creatures to each other by memory and perception processes, as well as through abstract notions and specific positioning."[34]

These spaces describe social distances between different positions[35] whereby boundaries define the entry criteria for a given space. Religions and religious institutions typically feature well-defined boundaries. Christianity, for instance, is defined by the sacrament of baptism, by which one enters into the Christian

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31 Leipoldt, Jesu Verhältnis zu Griechen und Juden, 221. For more examples on Leipoldt, see Schuster, Die Lehre vom "arischen" Christentum, 148–68.

32 For details of this racial construction see ibid., 169–98.

33 See Carl Schneider, Das Frühchristentum als antisemitische Bewegung (Bremen: Kommende Kirche, 1940).

34 Sergej Stoetzer, "Ort, Identität, Mentalität – soziologische Raumkonzepte," in Die Religion des Raumes und die Räumlichkeit der Religion, eds. Thomas Erne and Peter Schüz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010): 87–103, here at 97.

35 Ibid., 88.

congregation. An individual may become part of a religious community and thereby gain access to the space called religion by accepting given entry criteria and rules of behavior. Thus, while boundaries can be rather clear, acceptance of such criteria can serve to render them permeable.

In my case-study, however, something different was afoot. The German Christian Church Movement did not construct geographical or cultural spaces that could be used to breach the borders of salvation. Had they done so, converts who considered themselves 'German' and 'Protestant' could have been invited in. My study shows that, instead, this movement used race to build a space with restricted access to the divine. The racial subdivision was perceived as part of God's creation. Descent, meaning the religion one was born into or the religion of one's ancestry, defined this spatial boundary. It was only within these borders that religion could be accessed. The possibility of belonging to a specific God and a specific religion was thus circumscribed by exclusive racial boundaries. Religious space defined by confession and race excluded the 'other' subjects from salvation in an absolute way that left no possibility of becoming a member of the church. Only members of the 'Aryan race' could inhabit this constructed space, and only they could receive divine salvation. While those who were refused admittance to this space could still self-identify as a Christian, the church denied such individuals access to the holy sacraments because it did not deem them Christians, but rather Jews.

In this way, a religious space was constructed whose accessibility was restricted by race. This demarcation was justified by racist doctrine and legitimized by scientific research that 'demonstrated' the proclaimed contrast between Jews on the one hand, and Germans as the Chosen People, on the other. The last step towards adjustment of the religion with racist ideology and a realization of the German-Christian doctrine was the 'de-Judization' of contemporary Christianity, a step implemented by the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life.