

## ○ REVIEW OF *A SHADOW OF GLORY: READING THE NEW TESTAMENT AFTER THE HOLOCAUST*

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Richard Walsh reviews *A Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (Tod Linafelt, ed. New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

One of the essayists (Rendtorff) quotes Eli Wiesel's famous remark that it was Christianity, not the Jewish people, which died at Auschwitz. None of the essayists in Linafelt's fine collection agrees unequivocally, but they all assert that Christianity has to answer for the Holocaust. Linafelt's introduction nicely sets the tone for the volume by playing with the Book of Hebrews' Platonic notion of the 'shadow of glory', an early form of the notion (that some form of) Christianity – that is, the glory – triumphantly superseded (some form of) Judaism – that is, the shadow. For Linafelt and his essayists, such supersessionism is ultimately responsible for the Holocaust and, therefore, is a dark shadow on the reputation, or the glory, of Christianity. In light of that agreement, the essayists implicitly turn Wiesel's remark into a question: Has Christianity died or can (any form of) Christianity continue to exist or, even more accurately, can Christianity be redeemed after the Holocaust?

The first of the four sections of essays in the volume offers a tentative, affirmative response to the question. Rejecting the implicit essentialism in the notion that *Christianity* is responsible for the Holocaust, the first group of essays delves into the Holocaust in the history of interpretation. Raising the question of interpretation means, of course, that some forms of or interpretations of Christianity might be salvageable. Accordingly, various essayists (throughout the book) remark that various New Testament authors were Jews, that seemingly anti-Semitic features of the New Testament were actually part of intra-Jewish debate and the attempts of a minority form of Judaism to assert itself vis-à-vis dominant forms, and that the imperial, absolutist Christianity that arose with Constantine is the real culprit behind the Holocaust. In particular, it is the Christian canon (Eisenbaum) or historical-criticism (George) or Protestant historical paradigms that see Israel degrading into Judaism and early Christianity degrading into Roman Catholicism (Krause and Beal) that are the supersessionist backdrop of the Holocaust.

These early answers about Christianity's salvation, however, remain quite tentative, and Heschel wonders aloud 'whether the Aryan Jesus movement is a product of Christianity, or of Christianity gone awry' (p. 38). The tentative answers continue in part two, in a series of essays by confessed Jews, that build upon Eisenbaum's analysis of the problem as one of proximity, something that Jews see, not incidentally, more easily as a problem than Christians do. Thus, Eisenbaum claims that the notion of shared scriptures, often invoked in Jewish-Christian dialogue, actually covers real differences, rather than effectively joining Jews and Christians. The Christian canon, rendering the Hebrew Scriptures as an Old Testament, enshrines a view of Judaism as apostate and divinely rejected (cf. Rubenstein). Investigating his 'brother Paul', Rubenstein observes that the fraternal relationship has often turned fratricidal, most often, of course, for Jews 'done in' as apostates by Christians acting on behalf of God. Koosed describes the problem between Christianity and Judaism most concisely as a 'double bind':

Christianity without Judaism is nothing but a few dirty tatters. Christianity with Judaism fully intact is nothing but another Jewish sect that would have been reabsorbed into the mainstream. This is the double bind. Early Christians had to affirm the Jewish scriptures, laws, and rituals while at the same time demonstrating that they are invalidated, surpassed, superseded. They needed to demonstrate 'legitimate difference' (p. 95).

The Jew, thus, becomes both the 'Other within' and 'intolerable' (p. 97). Violence becomes inevitable. Of these essayists, Jacobs speaks most hopefully of Christianity's survival, but only if it eliminates anti-Semitic features in its founding texts (e.g., Matt. 27:25) and liturgy.

The essays in part three, by confessed Christians, understandably champion Jacobs's notion that a chastened Christianity can continue. In essence, these essayists call for a Christianity that renounces supersessionism and that recognizes a non-apostate Judaism, allowed its own independent existence. Thus, Brueggemann argues that Christians should acknowledge that they live in the Saturday 'in between' the days of crucifixion and resurrection, a day that lives in the presence of evil and that waits with Jews (cf. Buber) for the messiah. Tolstoy's hope relies on the claim that patriarchy, not Christianity, created the Holocaust and on women's witness about mutuality, not obedience. Gaston claims, like Eisenbaum, that the Christian canon is the problem. Accordingly, he rejects the ridiculous idea of a twofold canon in favor of one canon, the Hebrew Scriptures of which there are two authoritative midrashes, that of Judaism and that of Christianity. In a reflection on the much debated Carmelite cross erected at Auschwitz, Oldenborge describes post-Holocaust Christianity as necessarily relying on a 'poisoned religious reservoir' or a 'tainted tradition' (p. 148). Rendtorff responds to Wiesel's assertion most specifically and agrees with an important caveat: *Non-Jewish* Christianity died at Auschwitz. Christian Judaism, a Christianity redefined in light of the continued existence of the Jewish people, can continue.

The essays in the concluding section – at least, those by Hill, Dunn, and Johnson – defend Christianity most fervently. Hill claims that Luke-Acts is not supersessionist, that its position is equivalent to Paul's in Rom. 9-11, and that Luke-Acts simply justifies a Gentile church. Like Rubenstein, Segal, and Boyarin, Dunn locates Paul firmly within Jewish discourse, but he argues that Paul is an apostle of Israel, not an apostate. Further, his penultimate sentence defends Christianity so defiantly that it threatens many of the tacit assumptions in the conversation transpiring between the other essayists: 'To refuse Paul a voice in the contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue is to revert to pre-Holocaust confrontationalism and supersessionism (in reverse!)' (p. 213). Johnson's essay is a similar challenge to the tentative truce allowing the volume's conversation. Asserting that Christianity has as valid a starting point as Judaism (he offers the suggestion that Christians use the LXX, rather than the MT, as scripture), he critiques Fackenheim's famous post-Holocaust reading of the Hebrew Bible as a transformation of that text into a secular, nationalistic myth supporting the modern state of Israel.

Essays by Crossan and Phillips bookend these rigorous defenses and, thus, soften the tone of the final section. Crossan claims, as he has repeatedly, that the passion narrative is a fiction and suggests that it was first written by Christian Jews suffering persecution under Herod Agrippa I. Subsequent, more alienated Christian Jews simply intensified the motifs of Rome's innocence and Jewish culpability. For Crossan, however, the crucial question is ethical, so he asks in closing how 'our best historical reconstruction [might] avoid either brutalizing non-Christian Jews as

killers or else brutalizing Christian Jews as liars' (p. 183)? Also more concerned with the ethics of interpretation than with defending Christianity, Phillips denies that one can separate texts like Matthew's slaughtered innocents from its reading because Matthew 'kills' its Jewish founding text, the Exodus, by rewriting it, and because the popular performance and mass media transformations of Matthew's text have led again and again to dead children (e.g., in Serbian passion plays and violence against Muslims). His answer is 'to say "No" to Matthew's use of Hebrew scripture, "No" to the commentary tradition that averts the eyes or relativizes the problem, "No" to a critical interpretative practice that resists recognizing its own cultural implicature in readings that kill' (p. 245).

Generally, the essayists deny that Christianity died at Auschwitz and that Christianity is responsible for the Holocaust. Although not put precisely in this fashion, their answer is that those charges see Christianity too monolithically. Some Christianities died at Auschwitz and some Christianities or Christians are responsible for the Holocaust. Perhaps, the essayists avoid this phrasing of the answer because that would allow their readers to avoid the question of their own ethical implicature too easily (although some of the essayists come perilously close to this evasion by blaming the canon, historical criticism, patriarchy, biblical literalism, etc. for the problem or by simply defending Christianity's right to exist). In sum, the essayists remind readers that everyone who affirms Christianity in some way or who participates in New Testament studies deals with a 'tainted tradition'. Jacobs and Phillips pointedly remind readers that reading scriptures as a mandate for divine violence is not merely a matter of the past. Thus, Phillips calls readers' attention to recent Christian violence against Muslims. Jacobs uses reflection on violent texts in Christian scriptures to call Jewish readers' attention to violence-generating texts in Jewish scriptures. At least, for these two essayists, it is not only how one reads the scriptures after the Holocaust, it is also how one reads the scriptures after recognizing one's 'own cultural implicature in readings that kill' (p. 245).