

Yoder, John Howard. *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*. Ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs. Radical Traditions Series: Theology in a Postcritical Key. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, England: Eerdmans, 2003.

The reader of this volume will get three unique impressions of the text, conveyed by (a) reading only the material written by Yoder and interpreting it for her/himself; (b) reading only the material written by Cartwright and Ochs; and (c) reading the book as it is formatted, with editorial direction and interpretation as a guide.

Judging by its cover, one expects this book to revisit aspects of the Jewish-Christian schism, as written by Yoder and edited by Cartwright and Ochs. However, this is not the case. Instead, it is either an introduction by Ochs to post-liberal Jewish thought or a post-liberal Jewish dialogue between Ochs and “Yoder” on ideas contained in the latter’s posthumously published writings. If it is an introduction to post-liberal Jewish thought about the Jewish-Christian schism, then we can see how Ochs employs Yoder’s writings as a foil to advance the discussion from the perspective of “post-liberal Jews” to distance Yoder’s thesis and approach from subsequent debate.

Ten of Yoder’s essays provide the body of the text. This is supplemented by a (second) preface and a conclusionary sermon (Appendix A), both by Yoder. Yoder’s contribution comprises 156 pages of this 290-page work. The rest is by the editors: an editors’ introduction before Yoder’s preface, commentary by Ochs at the conclusion of each essay, an afterword by Cartwright, and an essay by Cartwright attempting to contextualize Yoder’s theological dialogue with Judaism. The book also includes a glossary and three indexes.

(a) *Yoder’s Content* Yoder expressed reluctance to publish these essays, which he had been working on from 1971 to 1996. He wanted to undertake further interaction with the writings of Krister Stendahl, Lloyd Gaston, Alan Segal, John Gager, James D. G. Dunn, E. P. Sanders, and James Sanders. Only in the last section of his preface do we learn the collection is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Steven S. Schwarzchild.

Yoder revisits Judaism and Christianity at a definitive, schismatic, intersecting point in their histories. With rabbinic insights provided through ongoing correspondence with Schwarzchild (Yoder calls him as his own

Rabbi), in wondering whether a schism need have occurred, Yoder explores what better path could have been taken by the two monotheistic religions in their nascent stages. He adopts three classic models — a Jeremaic Judaism that gives way to Rabbinic (Judaism) and to messianic (Christianity) offspring — to advance his reconstruction. He hopes to initiate a resumption of dialogue characterized by respect and acknowledgement of the other's religious convictions. ("Both parties agree on what happened and why. My claim is that they are wrong not where they differ but where they agree" [31].)

*b) Ochs and Cartwright's Content* Yoder's thesis and approach are framed in a context that highlights theoretical and methodological constructs of the Society for Textual Reasoning, of which Ochs is a member. The Society, boasting some 300 members, seeks "to articulate the patterns of Rabbinic and post-Rabbinic reasoning that could guide religious reformation after the Shoah" (5). Textual reasoners purposefully distance themselves from the "first principles of reasoning imposed by the modern Academy" and distinguish their efforts from those of Rabbinic scholars, whom they label as anti-modern because they "insulate an 'indigenous' Rabbinic tradition from any exposure to the 'alien' influences of modern thinking." Ochs and other textual reasoners instead determine to combine Rabbinic sacred literature with academic exigency, unfettered by the Rabbinic tradition's hermeneutical demands or the Academy's scholastic containment.

Ochs's concern that Yoder's thesis offers the potential for a supercessionist strategy (68) appears unfounded. Yoder has stated his opposition to any expression of that view ("The theological claim that the Church has replaced God's people for the salvation and blessing of the world," as indicated by identification as God's elect people and royal/holy priesthood). Even when explaining supercessionism, Yoder indicated his own view moved well beyond it. Some 39 times in his responses to Yoder, Ochs refers to a Jewish "post-liberal" counter-perspective. By this epithet he encapsulates his stance and that of other contemporary, post-Holocaust Jewish scholars, contrasting or comparing it to identifiable "others" within the Judaisms of past and present. (Yoder refers to some seventeen varieties of Judaism.) I sometimes identify with the post-liberal soubriquet myself but wonder what other Jewish scholars might think of inclusion in this category. Ochs argues that Yoder's reconstruction at times portrays a Judaism unrecognizable to

him and his Textual Reasoning colleagues. So far as Yoder expresses dependency on a Jewish perspective appropriated through extensive dialogue with Schwarzchild, Ochs's criticism is directed primarily at the latter (7, 12-19, 92, 120, 203).

Cartwright concludes his part of the editors' introduction in a summary statement of Yoder's thesis. "Yoder's argument is directed at overthrowing the assumptions of Constantinian Christianity as they have shaped *virtually all* forms of religious practice in western civilization since the second century CE" (22), an imprecision of Yoder's own timeline that Ochs corrects (67). He cautions against accepting Yoder's attempt to re-situate the conversation between Jews and Christians to a pacifistic, nonviolence forum. Yoder "not only does not aptly characterize the deviance of the 'pacifism of rabbinical nonviolence' but displaces the necessity for contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue" (23-24).

Cartwright and Ochs should be recognized as this book's real authors. In making the case for a post-liberal Jewish approach to the topic, Ochs offers the greater contribution. Cartwright's introductory words and afterword summarize what Ochs and Yoder have already introduced, and his appendix on (re)locating Yoder's dialogue is misplaced. On this reading, Yoder's essays serve mainly as a foil for Ochs to advance the ideas of the textual reasoners.

(c) *Reading The Text as a Whole* The format establishes Cartwright and Ochs's material as a *clavis scripturae* or *crux interpretum* for Yoder's thoughts. If the former (*clavis*, a key), then Yoder's best thoughts are highlighted by their additions. If the latter (*crux*, a decisive point), his intentions are compromised by an imposed editorial hermeneutic.

Given that the "editors" have both the first and last word for the entire collection, and an interpretive word at the end of each chapter, their names should be included as authors. Further, given that they employ Yoder's essays to advance their own thesis towards Jewish-Christian dialogue, perhaps his name should be removed completely as author, and a title change would be in order. I suggest: *On Yoder's Unpublished Collection of Essays Entitled, The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited: Why It Does Not Offer a Valid Paradigm for Modern Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, by Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs.

I also note that neither Yoder nor Cartwright and Ochs interact with the internationally acknowledged Christian statement about the Church and Jews in the *Nostra Aetate* of Vatican II. As well, no mention is made of the great contributions of the statement's authors, Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher and Sister Rose Thering.

It is regrettable that we cannot know Yoder's response to the way his essays are arranged in the present dialogical format, and we may wonder what his rejoinder would be to Ochs and Cartwright.

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Loren L. Johns. *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*. Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

This volume explores one aspect of the Apocalypse's rhetorical force, namely the integral link between its Lamb Christology and ethics. Loren Johns argues that by his faithful witness unto death, Jesus, the slaughtered lamb, conquered evil and thereby became a model for first-century believers' own nonviolent resistance to evil. Johns's reading of the text seeks both faithfulness to its historical context and concern for the effects of the reading on the community of faith. Both of these aims he accomplishes well.

Much of this book is a detailed examination of the semantic and religious-historical background of the image of Christ as lamb, in order to understand its associations for the original readers of the Apocalypse. A study of the semantic domain of "lamb" in biblical and extra-biblical writings results in the cautious conclusion that "lamb" in the Apocalypse has a non-sacrificial connotation and expresses vulnerability. To establish the cultural gestalt of ovine symbolism in the Apocalypse, Johns examines the role of sheep in Paleolithic art, Egyptian religion, Aesopic fables, and Greek and Roman mythology, art, and religion. A study of early Jewish literature and rabbinic literature follows. Johns finds no precedent for the triumphant Lamb Redeemer figure in Early Judaism, where lambs usually symbolize vulnerability.