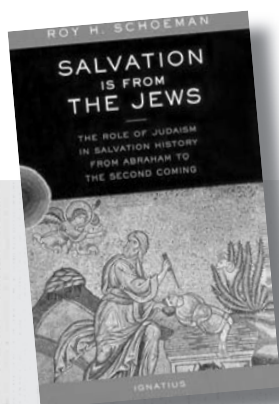


BOOK REVIEWS



Salvation is from the Jews

The author of the book, Roy H. Schoeman, was born 1951 in North America to Jewish parents who were Holocaust refugees. During the summer between high school and college he visited Israel. There he traveled with the "charismatic" Hasidic Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and flirted with the thought of remaining in Israel to study Judaism in a yeshiva. However, things worked out differently. Years later, he received revelations and dreams which led him to say, as he does in his conversion story: "I was hopelessly in love with the Blessed Virgin Mary and wanted nothing more than to become as totally a Christian as I could." The conversion story is printed in the postscript of the book.



Had it not been for the reference to the Virgin Mary his conversion story could have been printed in any book about (non-Catholic) Messianic Jews – as could many other things in this book. To me this makes this book even more interesting. It questions my presupposed opinions about what can be said and found within the Catholic Church. If for no other reason it makes the book worth reading.

Schoeman was later baptized, but like other Jewish-born believers within the Catholic Church he insists he does not see his entry into the Church as a conversion away from Judaism, but rather as its completion. The Jew remains a Jew, whether he is Christian or not, he maintains. A Jew in becoming a Catholic does not change his religion, but fulfills his religion, completes it, crowns it. Throughout the book he sees it as his challenge to remind his church of the continued role of Israel in the salvation history. He accepts neither Christian "supersessionism" – "that the Old Covenant had been entirely replaced ... made null and void, by the New" nor the thought that "the Old and New Covenant are two 'separate but equal' parallel paths to salvation, the one intended for Jews, the other for Gentiles." In the author's own words:

This book proposes a third alternative – that as the Old Covenant was brought to fruition by the New at the first coming, so will the New Covenant be brought to fruition by the Old, by the return of the Jews at the Second Coming. Thus, the current

Salvation is from the Jews The Role of Judaism in Salvation History from Abraham to the Second Coming

ROY H. SCHOEMAN
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WWW.IGNATIUS.COM

wave of Jewish entry into the Church may be among the most important things going on today, or indeed, in the history of the world.

It is interesting to see that even though the Catholic Church is *the* Church for Schoeman, he has no problem including Messianic Jews outside the Catholic Church into “the current wave of Jewish entry into the Church.” Similarly, and without hesitation, mention is made of Jewish converts in the 19th century who worked within the Protestant Church. Among these are people like Joseph Frey, Joseph Wolff, Michael Alexander, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem (who is inaccurately reported as bishop in 1824; he was ordained in 1841 and arrived in Jerusalem in 1842), David Baron, Leon Levinson and others. The author’s inclusion of biographical material on Jewish converts from within the Catholic Church makes for some interesting reading, for example the twin brothers Augustin and Joseph Lemann, Alphonse Ratisbonne, Israel Zolli, Edith Stein and others.

The chapter on *The Jews and the Second Coming* is of special interest. Read in isolation and without reference to the author’s identity, one finds here an understanding of Biblical texts which corresponds to what one can find in (many) Messianic Jewish and Christian writings on the last days and on Israel. Even though Schoeman doesn’t think that he can “prove” that we are in the last days, he still believes that contemporary events point in that direction. “Jerusalem will return again to Jewish hands shortly before the Second Coming” (Luke 21:24) – which happened during the Six Day War. “Sometime before the Second Coming, two-thirds of the Jews in ‘the whole land’ will be exterminated” (Zechariah 13:8-9) – which according to the author was fulfilled through the Holocaust. “The Jewish nation will be reborn in a single day” (Isaiah 66:5-8) – which “was quite

literally fulfilled when on May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was born in a single day” and Jeremiah 16:14-15 is seen as “a reference to the current immigration to Israel of Jews from Russia.” As if this were not enough, the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt – something which is possible now after Israel regained possession of the Temple Mount in 1967, the author claims.

This is not the place to discuss the principles behind such a use of Scripture and the theological implications of a rebuilding of the temple. However, it is worth noting that such thoughts can be found within the Catholic Church. That Schoeman finds a *theologically* defined role for the State of Israel will no doubt be met with negative reactions from many Catholic Christians and especially Arab Christians. Schoeman sees a direct connection between Hitler and Arab Anti-Semitism today. One could have wished that he had analyzed anti-Semitism within the Church throughout history with the same acuity which he uses when he talks about anti-Semitism and the Arab world today.

Although I disagree with the author on several items I welcome his thoughts on the question of Israel’s role within the history of salvation and the way this is presented to a Catholic readership. When it comes to the question of whether or not Jews need Jesus for salvation there is no doubt which these clear words reveal:

If Jesus was the Jewish Messiah – the Messiah long prophesied, expected, and prayed for by the Jews – then a Jew can either be right and accept that He was the Messiah or be wrong and maintain that He was not. If Jesus was the Messiah, then Jews who reject Christianity (or Messianic Judaism) are wrong; if Jesus was not the Messiah, then Christians, however well meaning, are wrong. There is not necessarily any moral shame or culpability in being wrong, but it is nonsense to maintain that



somehow Judaism is right for Jews, and Christianity is right for Christians, and that the truth is dependent on what group one belongs to ...

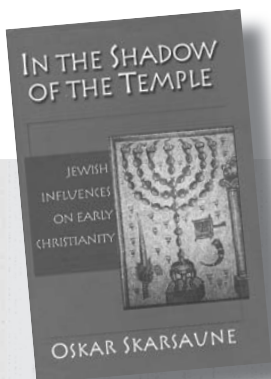
Kai Kjær-Hansen

In The Shadow of the Temple

The contents of this book are not what many people would suppose from its title. Chronologically it begins in the second century BCE and ends in the third century CE, with glimpses into even later periods. This reflects Skarsaune's well-substantiated claim that "Jewish influences" on Christianity were not confined to Christian origins but continued throughout the patristic period. The chronological starting-point enables Skarsaune to devote the first part (more than a quarter) of the book to a comprehensive sketch of late Second Temple Judaism, doing full justice to the wide-ranging changes that occurred in this period. The rest of the book is almost a history of early Christianity written from the perspective of its relationship with Judaism, a fact that makes good sense in the light of the importance of that relationship. Of course, this history has to be covered quite rapidly, but there is something on most topics one would expect to find in a history

of early Christianity. Skarsaune opts, very sensibly, to focus in some detail on selected themes and events, which makes for a much more interesting book than one that covered everything very briefly. The book is written for the general reader, though it would also be very helpful to beginning students studying New Testament or early Christianity. The style and character of the book are just right to be accessible to a wide readership, and the suggestions for further reading are excellent.

This is the kind of wide-ranging book for the general reader that can only be written by a mature scholar with a high level of expertise and familiarity with everything he writes about. He is also not afraid of presenting his own view of topics when this is not shared by the majority of scholars (while always alerting the reader to the fact that it is not). As it happens, on such controversial topics (e.g. Hebrews and Hellenists in Acts 6-7, the nature of Jewish Christianity and the relation of the Ebionites to it, the Jewish rather than hellenistic roots of patristic Christology), I find myself usually in agreement with him. His treatments of some of these issues are themselves valuable contributions to debate. Of course, there are some weaknesses. I was disappointed, for example, to find that his treatment of "the Zealot movement" (as though there were such a thing) ignores the work of Richard Horsley and others who have argued that there was no such movement and that not even Josephus pretends that there was. Also



In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity

OSKAR SKARSAUNE
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