

The Faithful in a Time of Trial

The Evangelical Understanding of the Holocaust

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Abstract

The Holocaust occupies an important place in Christian evangelical literature. The murder of millions of Jews in Europe during World War II has been a topic evangelicals have needed to deal with, and books relating to the Holocaust have been popular in evangelical circles since the 1970s. The central issue such books confront is how Christian believers behaved during that unprecedented time of trial. The books have come to reassure evangelical Christians that true Christian believers had nothing to do with the persecution and annihilation of Jews, and that in fact their behavior had been exemplary. Evangelical writers have further pointed to the horrors of the Holocaust, as a proof that human beings are in need of accepting Jesus as their Savior and following in his footsteps. Evangelical Holocaust literature also has come to promote the evangelical opinion on the special role of Jews in history and the need to evangelize that nation.

Introduction

[1] The Holocaust occupies an important place in Christian evangelical literature. The murder of millions of Jews in Europe during World War II has been a topic that evangelicals have dealt with, and books relating to the Holocaust have been popular in evangelical circles since the 1970s. The central issue such books confront is how Christian believers have behaved during that unprecedented time of trial. The question has especially preoccupied evangelicals who take an interest in the Jews and in Israel, are engaged in evangelizing Jews, or are themselves Jews who have converted to evangelical Christianity. These books came to reassure evangelical Christians that true Christian believers had nothing to do with the persecution and annihilation of Jews. Evangelical writers have further pointed to the horrors of the Holocaust as a proof that human beings are in need of accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior and following in his footsteps. The books also give evidence to the evangelical understanding of the course of Jewish history and the role of Israel in God's plans for humanity as well as the need to evangelize that nation.

[2] A major element in the evangelical understanding of the Holocaust has been the claim that the evils and horrors of the Nazi regime were carried out by non-Christians. True Christians, persons who had undergone a conversion experience and established a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, could not, by definition, take part in the Nazi regime and its atrocities. Nazi transgressions had been carried out by non-Christians, in fact anti-Christians, even if nominally some of them were members of churches. However, such an outlook is not based on any historical examination of the involvement or noninvolvement of evangelical groups with the Nazi regime in occupied Europe (cf. Ericksen and Heschel). The fact that evangelical churches in Germany supported the regime has often been ignored by evangelical writers. They do not, as a rule, present historical studies of Christian behavior during the period. They have concentrated instead on the heroism of individuals, members of pietist or evangelical churches, and have preferred to read their memoirs. Such biographical presentations have come to convey the message that true Christians behaved in a manner that demonstrated Christian ideals; they

refused to take part in the Nazi regime and went out of their way to protect Jews and hide them, risking their own lives along the way.

Corrie ten Boom

[3] Published in the early 1970s, *The Hiding Place* is probably the most widely read Holocaust literature in evangelical circles. The hero, Corrie ten Boom, had published an earlier version of her memoirs as *Prisoner and Yet*. The evangelist Billy Graham was interested in ten Boom's narrative and saw that it had great potential as an evangelical tract. He invited her to the United States to tour and lecture on her wartime experiences, and sponsored both a new version of her book and a film based on it. The new book was written by two professional writers of Billy Graham's network, John and Elizabeth Sherrill, and became an evangelical bestseller. It was translated into a number of languages and reprinted in numerous editions. Over two million copies of the book have been sold.

[4] The book tells the story of the ten Booms, a devout Dutch Reform family, who operated a watch shop in Haarlem, a city near Amsterdam. Corrie and her sister Betsie, both unmarried, lived with their aging father above the watch shop. When the Nazi occupation and the persecution of Dutch Jews began, the ten Booms gave shelter to Jews who were hiding from the Nazis. The entire family became involved in a clandestine organization that hid Jews, as well as Dutch youth who were in danger of being taken to forced labor in Germany. They helped find hiding places for Jews and hid a few Jews themselves in a secret room in their own house. Corrie gives a vivid and realistic account of many aspects of their rescue activity. Because many Dutch people collaborated with the Nazis and informers were everywhere, one had to make an effort to keep the rescue operation secret from those who did not take part in it. Daily life with the hidden Jews is described with credibility. It was difficult, for example, for many of them to remain in their cramped quarters. One Jewish woman virtually gave herself up by walking out in the streets; she was recognized and arrested.

[5] While ten Boom gives an accurate picture of Holland under Nazi occupation, indicating that only a minority among the Dutch were willing to risk themselves for the sake of saving Jewish lives, her description implies that true Christian believers, brought up on biblical literalism, were in the forefront of the rescue mission. Indeed, according to one source, the percentage of fundamentalist Dutch Protestants who rescued Jews during World War II was more than three times their percentage in the total Dutch population, making up about 25% of those who saved Jews (Michman: 349-52).

[6] The Lord guided and protected the rescuers, so ten Boom tells us. Corrie's sister-in-law, for example, insisted on speaking the truth in all circumstances. At one time, the police, who had been informed of the presences of hiding Jews, searched her house and inquired whether a blond, blue-eyed, Aryan-looking girl who was working there was Jewish. "Yes," came the answer of the sister-in-law-who-would-not-lie (ten Boom: 123-24). The poor girl was arrested, but later was released, so the story goes, by the Dutch underground.

[7] Another miracle that, according to ten Boom, manifested God's guiding hand had to do with the Bible. While in the concentration camp, Corrie obtained a copy of the Bible and managed, in defiance of all regulations and inspection, to keep it and read it (193-94).

[8] In actuality, the family paid dearly for disobeying the authorities. Their home, "the hiding place," was exposed. Corrie, her sister Betsie, her father, brother, and nephew were arrested.

Only Corrie survived. The story of her imprisonment is told in great detail. It is a story of Christian martyrdom. She and her family members kept their Christian faith and values all through that period. For some of them it meant until their death. They were a source of inspiration and encouragement to the prisoners around them. Corrie portrays her father as a saintly figure, and describes her sister as an exemplary person, bringing order, tranquility, peace, and hope to the prison cells or concentration camp barracks where she was situated. She, herself, emerges from the pages of her reminiscences as a very remarkable woman - strong-willed, highly motivated, conscientious, humorous, and humane. Indeed, she arouses the reader's deepest appreciation. In keeping with the values that the book is intended to promote, it suggests that even Corrie was faced with temptations: the Devil was trying to increase her selfishness and make her take care of herself. But she fought back and took the upper hand. When her father was alive, Corrie's feelings had taken her astray. It was often he, a tower of righteousness, piety, and kindness, who led her back to the right path. But, she informs us, Jesus was her source of strength and guidance in the concentration camp. It is he, she asserts, who provides human beings with the ability to overcome the challenges and miseries of life.

[9] In line with the evangelical Protestant tradition, ten Boom emphasizes that only through Jesus can human beings achieve salvation. It was Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that offered humanity eternal life. The true believers who accept him as their Lord and Savior are assured of their place in the world to come. In this context she is able to deal with the deaths of those who were so dear to her (163, 189, 223).

[10] One feature of the book's message is the Christian command of love for one's enemy. Corrie and her family felt sorry for the Germans, for letting themselves be engaged in evil and destruction. They, too, needed God's love, forgiveness, and guidance. Corrie's father, in saying that he felt sorry for the Germans for "they have touched the apple of God's eyes" (i.e. killed the Jews), demonstrated the attitude of premillennialist evangelicals towards the Jews, as well as the idea that the Nazis, too, were children of God and deserved compassion (86). After the war was over, Corrie ten Boom offered her spiritual assistance both in Germany and in Holland to former Nazis, trying to spread a message of forgiveness and reconciliation. The book's evangelization efforts are directed at Germans too, and it carries the message of not only "love thy enemy" but also that the truly converted were utterly forgiven. The book also promotes the evangelical understanding of the Jews and their role in history. Following a more literal reading of the scriptures, ten Boom believed that the Jews were still God's chosen people, destined to regain their role as God's first nation. The German attempt to destroy the Jews was therefore futile, and in the long run could only harm the Germans.

[11] Corrie's experiences during the Holocaust, as narrated in her book, became a classic in evangelical circles, providing proof that true Christian believers behaved properly during the Holocaust period, risking their lives to save Jews, that Jesus protected his flock morally and physically all along the way, and that righteous Christians forgive their enemies. It is important to note that while the ten Booms were conservative Protestants, they were not evangelicals in the American sense of the word. Yet during the 1970s, Corrie and her story were adopted by American evangelicals as if she were one of their own.

Maria Anne Hirschmann

[12] One beneficiary of Corrie ten Boom's willingness to forgive the Germans was Maria Anne Hirschmann, whose autobiographical account, *Hansi's New Life*, describes the spiritual journey

of a Nazi woman who converted, repented, and became a member of the evangelical community in America. Hirschmann also wrote an earlier, semi-autobiographical book, *Hansi, The Girl Who Loved the Swastika*. *Hansi's New Life* is in many ways a continuation of the first book, with large parts dedicated to her experiences in her new homeland.

[13] Hirschmann recounts the suffering of Germans: the shock of the defeat, her fear of being raped by Soviet soldiers, and her escape to West Germany. Her reminiscences follow her immigration to America with her husband, who had served as a submarine officer in the German Navy, their adaptation to their new homeland, and the spiritual journey that led her towards a true conversion experience. Her conversion receives special meaning because it is that of a former Nazi.

Jesus and I became friends one warm summer night under the stars . . . I was like Paul, a chief sinner, I had rejected Christ deliberately when I became a Nazi. I despised His name and His life story as unacceptable to German superiority (1980: 106).

She sought and obtained, so we learn, the forgiveness of God and his true believers. She condemns the Jews for not showing forgiveness. Journalists who “tortured” her by asking her if she knew about the concentration camps were Jewish. While Germans bear guilt, she declares, Jews carry hate and prejudices (1980: 118). She declares that she herself forgave her own oppressors (1980: 88).

[14] Hansi's story ends with a meeting with Corrie ten Boom. At first, she writes, she was afraid to meet this righteous Dutch savior of Jews, who, she knew, had spent time in a concentration camp. But this perfect evangelical Christian accepted her warmly. Corrie's attitude towards Hansi reflects the forgiveness every Christian is supposed to show towards his former enemies. Corrie even wrote a short preface to Hirschmann's book, in which she expressed that opinion. Thus, Hansi's Nazi past was forgiven by both Jesus and the evangelical community.¹

Johanna Ruth Dobschiner

[15] Another widely circulated book, Johanna Ruth Dobschiner's *Selected to Live*, has given a special meaning to a conversion experience of a victim of the Nazis. Like other evangelical memoirs of Holocaust survivors, it has been in print since it was first published in the 1970s.

[16] The Dobschiners, an Orthodox German-Jewish family, went as refugees from Nazi Germany to Holland. They settled in Amsterdam, where the Nazi occupation caught up with them again. The first to be taken to a concentration camp were Ruth's two brothers. Some time later her parents were deported to a concentration camp. Her description of her refugee parents is of hopeless, agonized individuals. She has little admiration, or even compassion, for these victims of circumstances that were beyond their control. Ruth hid when her parents were arrested and lived on her own in homes to which the Jewish council assigned her. She worked as a nurse in hospitals and children's homes. The deportations continued, hospitals and children's homes closed down, and their inhabitants were rounded up and sent to the death camps. Before her turn to be deported came, Ruth was “chosen” to be rescued by a clandestine Dutch network that

¹ Other evangelical activists, too, expressed the demand that Jews forgive the Germans. Such was the message, for example, of Jan Willem van der Hoeven, spokesman of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, in 1993, while introducing a German group to an Israeli audience at a Sukkot (Tabernacles) celebration in the Biniane Hauma Center in Jerusalem.

rescued Jews and placed them in Christian homes. Her first hiding place was in the home of the initiator of her escape: a Dutch Reform minister who was later caught and executed by the Nazis.

[17] It was in the hiding place that she encountered Christianity, discovered the Old and New Testaments, and accepted them in their evangelical interpretation. Ruth's rescuer "Domie," or "Uncle Bas" as he was called by his friends, was described in terms similar to those generally reserved for Jesus. He symbolized purity, love, protection, and self-sacrifice. "He died to secure my life in this world, Christ died to secure it in the next," she wrote (224). Like Domie, Jesus served as a father figure for her. When she reached the passages in the New Testament that described his death, she mourned for him "according to the custom of my people . . . seven days" (162). The adoption of Jesus as a personal Savior worked to overcome the loneliness of the hiding place: "I found I could tolerate my isolation without frustration always longing for the next opportunity to learn more about Him for He had become my hero" (159).

With warm love He surrounded me in that bare attic. He gave me courage when the air raid sirens sounded their tearful piercing tone. When others ran to the shelters, He stayed with me. His Holy Spirit, able to be everywhere at the same time, covered me with security. I knew myself loved, even when no human being considered my need. His cross became my symbol of ultimate victory . . . victory over suffering and death (197).

Christianity, in addition to being the religion of her kind saviors, embodied for the young woman in hiding hope for a new life, the resurrection of her beloved ones from death, and an end to her loneliness and misery. Dobschiner's autobiography is that of both a Holocaust survivor and a convert, intended, among other things, to describe her spiritual journey to Christ and to promote the belief in what she considers to be the truth. Her survival had been predetermined by God. Hiding was not only a struggle for physical survival; it was also a spiritual journey that came to open her eyes to the light of the true faith.

[18] Dobschiner's autobiography was intended also for the evangelization of Jews. Her description of herself before her encounter with the Christian beliefs is of one who was prejudiced against the Christian faith and held suspicious attitudes towards Christians and Christianity. She had the image of Christians as trying to capture Jewish souls, and of Christianity as alien and hostile to the Jews. But her prejudices resulted, she discovered, from ignorance of the true nature of Christianity. Christians, she found out, were gentle, well-meaning, self-sacrificing people. Their behavior, she decided, must result from the nature of their faith. "It must be a special religion . . . hence their kindness in taking us in" (163). Uncle Bas' religion had been "so different, so pure and clean, so friendly and full of understanding and love" (194) that "I felt protected and loved among them," she concludes (213).

[19] The message is intended for potential Jewish readers of her book. It reaffirms the evangelical view of the Jewish refusal to accept Christianity. If Jews only knew what true Christianity was about, they would embrace it wholeheartedly. When Jews encountered nominal Christians who mistreated them, they mistook Christianity for the religion of the enemy. "But this is our religion . . . the trouble is that our people don't know it, they have to be told," she writes (191). Writing from the perspective of an evangelical Christian, she asserts that the suffering and murder of the Jews under the Nazis was a result of the fact that the Jews had not placed themselves under the wings of their Savior. In her opinion, if the Jews had recognized Jesus as their Savior, the miseries and destruction that befell them would not have occurred.

My people . . . their unnecessary suffering . . . the fear among young and old . . . the premature murderous death of all those millions . . . Had we as a people, gone our own way, become introverts instead of listeners and His obedient followers? (177-78; cf. Also 191-92).

[20] While in hiding, Dobschiner adopted a long-standing Christian approach towards the Jewish responsibility for the passion and crucifixion of Jesus.

I read of how horribly He was treated, how cruelly He was betrayed and tortured . . . It was in the main, His very own people, fellow Jews who instigated all the trouble. Why, oh, why? My people brought Him to a Roman Court in order that Pontius Pilate would sentence Him to death. How could they do such a thing? I was furious! The Roman Governor told the crowd on several occasions that there was no reason to crucify Him. Why did they not give up and cease to torment and persecute him? When they took Him up a hillside to nail him to a wooden cross, all my deepest feelings were roused in sympathy for the meek sufferer and in disgust and bewilderment with my own people. How could they do such a thing? (160).

[21] With all her anger at the Jews, Dobschiner foresees, in keeping with the evangelical outlook on the Jewish people, a hope and future for the Jews in the messianic age. "God would one day send the Messiah. He would deliver Israel and call nations to see true light in God, discovering His eternal purposes for mankind as a whole" (156).

Vera Schlamm

[22] A similar outlook was promoted in another widely-acclaimed evangelical biography. Vera Schlamm's Holocaust experience has also served to give special meaning to her testimony as a Jew who found spiritual comfort in Christianity. The Schlamms were also German Jews who came to Holland as refugees and were sent during the Nazi occupation to a Dutch concentration camp. They, however, took active steps to secure their lives by obtaining South American passports. Schlamm describes the harsh reality of Bergen-Belsen, the German concentration camp to which she and her family were sent from Holland. As persons holding passports of neutral countries, they were able to receive parcels from relatives abroad and were immune from being sent to be killed. The family, including her sister and brother-in-law, survived the war.

[23] The Schlamms immigrated to America, where Vera studied medicine and trained as a pediatrician. It was during her years as a doctor in California that she gradually became persuaded of the truth of the Christian message and converted. The conversion experience she had undergone gave a new perspective to her entire life history. Her experiences during the war became, in retrospect, meaningful steps in her spiritual odyssey. The book conveys the notion that Vera's conversion (followed by that of her parents) was predetermined. Jesus was waiting to embrace them and bring them under his wings, hence their survival of the horrors of the Holocaust. Although she was not yet a Christian when the Holocaust took place, her survival is presented as another manifestation and proof of the wonderful gifts God bestows on his followers. The truly converted were always saved.

Rose Warmer

[24] A somewhat different testimony than Dobschiner's and Schlamm's is Rose Warmer's *The Journey*. Like other memoirs, *The Journey* evolved from an earlier, shorter work. The evangelical community was yearning to read life stories of the kind Rose Warmer could provide, and Myrna Grant, a professional evangelical writer, interviewed her in her old-age home in Haifa and came out with *The Journey*. The author begins by setting the background and describing Rose Warmer's early life. She was born into a bourgeois Jewish family in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, studied art, music, and dance and led the bohemian life of an artist in pre-World War II Vienna and Budapest. In keeping with other converts' biographies, this book describes Rose in her pre-conversion state as centered around earthly interests and pleasures; consequently, she felt spiritually and morally empty, and was unhappy and dissatisfied. Finally, Rose found Christ and became an evangelist. During the war years, under the Hungarian fascist regime, Rose could travel freely around the country, with official permits she obtained as a Baptist missionary. Protected by missionary friends, she could have hidden during the war, but she chose, instead, to join her suffering people (Grant: 104-7). She felt that she had a mission to carry out - to bring the message of salvation to the inhabitants of the death camp. So, despite the fact that she could have avoided being deported, she went to the concentration camp almost voluntarily. She trusted Jesus and knew that he was watching over and protecting her. She knew that she would undergo physical suffering, but she also knew that she would be saved, assuming that morally and spiritually she could stand the trial.

[25] Rose was sent by the Nazis from the death camp to a work squadron in Germany and suffered hunger and cold. As far as she was concerned, however, she was fulfilling a mission, setting an example to the other women, and bringing them a message of hope and redemption. Although at times she encountered anger and resentment on the part of some women, according to her testimony, she also found ready and willing listeners among them. God's guiding hand was evident in the various developments in her life as a prisoner. Her belief gave her courage to continue living even when she felt completely exhausted. She believed that giving up the struggle for life would have meant suicide on her part, and then she would never have had the privilege of meeting the Lord (Grant: 136). She carried on. Having a Bible with her meant a great deal to Rose and she carefully hid the copy she had brought with her. When she was forced to give it up, she sought ways to replace it. Once a Nazi SS officer gave her a copy of the Bible. Another time, she approached the commander of the labor camp for a copy and received one (Grant: 137). The fellowship of true Christian believers was also very important to her, and she rejoiced when she met other Christians with whom she could pray or read the Bible. While part of the labor squadron, she tithed her food and gave one tenth of it to others. Many among the prisoners mourned over the loss of their dear ones, but as she had dedicated herself to the Lord and given up everything and everyone in order to follow him, she felt that there was nothing for her to lose (Grant: 118). Jesus, she believed, was a father and mother, a brother and sister; he served as a whole family. She therefore felt especially inclined to bring Jesus to those who had lost their entire families in the Holocaust.

[26] Following liberation, Rose returned to Hungary, working there for some years as an evangelist. After the birth of the State of Israel, she emigrated there, settled in Haifa, and spent the rest of her life as a missionary to the Jews of that country. She became a leading figure in the Messianic Jewish community in Israel during the 1950s-1970s, which was composed of Jews who had converted to Christianity in its evangelical form but retained their Jewish identity and

saw themselves as part of Israeli society. In Israel, people occasionally reacted negatively to her evangelization efforts. Identifying Christianity with the oppressors, some would shout, "Where were you when my people were in the ovens?" "I was there," she would answer. She interprets the emergence of the new state and the ingathering of the Jews there as part of God's plans for his people, the nation of Israel. She herself was living proof that God remained faithful to his people. "I was part of the promise! I had returned" (Grant: 213).

[27] Rose's journey to human hell and back is presented as part of a broader spiritual journey: that of finding her Savior, submitting to his love and protection, discovering the many ways in which he bestows his favors on his followers, and being a witness of this to others. Rose was invited numerous times by evangelical congregations around the world to talk about her experiences during the Holocaust years. Her book, written by a professional evangelical writer, was translated into a number of languages and circulated throughout the world.

Rachmiel Frydland

[28] Like other Holocaust memoirs written by survivors who converted to Christianity, Rachmiel Frydland's *When Being Jewish Was a Crime* evolved from a previous, shorter and less polished work. Frydland begins his story with a narration about his life before the Holocaust. He grew up in a village near Chelm in eastern Poland, but went as a teenager to Warsaw to study in a *yeshiva*, a rabbinical academy. Frydland, who is writing for non-Jewish readers, offers thorough explanations of various Orthodox Jewish practices, demonstrating his knowledge of Jewish tradition and law. It was in Warsaw that he encountered missionaries to the Jews and became convinced of the messiahship of Jesus. During the war years, Frydland made special efforts and even risked his life several times in order to meet other evangelical Christians, with whom he could pray or study the Bible. When all the Jews in the area were being either killed or sent to concentration camps, Frydland went into hiding. He tried to find refuge in the homes of born-again evangelical Christians. The attitudes he encountered were varied. Some people were helpful, some hesitant, whereas others flatly refused to offer shelter. Frydland puts much of the blame for such unbrotherly behavior on a wrong perception many Christians had concerning their duties as obedient citizens (1978: 148). Christians considered it their duty to obey the laws of the state instead of resisting them when they manifested cruelty and disregard for other human beings (1978: 147). In other countries such as Holland, where, he claims, Christianity was "more developed," Christians disobeyed the Nazis' laws and sheltered Jews. Those Christians who did shelter Jews, he asserts, did not regret it, for God protected them.

When a Christian decided to disobey the law of extermination and took in a Jewish child, man or woman, to give shelter, God honored that willingness of obedience and sacrifice. As far as I know, none of the Christians in Poland who sheltered Jewish people were ever caught or killed (1978: 151).

[29] According to Frydland's account, God's guiding and sheltering hand was also revealed in various events that happened to Jewish Christians during the Holocaust years. Frydland tells the story of Stasiak, a Jewish Christian who "was deeply aware of God's presence and ability to save to the uttermost, physically and spiritually" (1978: 134). Stasiak was at one point condemned to death. While awaiting death, he wrote on the wall of his cell, in Polish, the first verse of his favorite hymn, in which he was praising and thanking the Lord. The German officer in charge came in and demanded a translation of the text on the wall. To the amazement of everyone who was there, Stasiak was released.

[30] Frydland is, however, well aware that many Christian Jews, true believers, were murdered by the Nazis. He nevertheless believes that their death, the martyrdom of true believers, was a happy death. They are joined with the Lord. In describing the death they suffered at the hand of the Nazis, he says:

[They] remained faithful to the very end . . . When the time came for them to face death, they prepared their children, partook of the Lord's Supper with them, told them not to be afraid and that the pain would last only a few minutes. Then they would be in a better place, a mansion in heaven. The children sometimes had given their testimonies to the exterminators and had died without hate in full reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ (1978: 142-43).

[31] In Frydland's view, if the Jews had accepted Jesus as their Savior their fate would have also been happier. "If my people had known the things that pertain to their salvation, namely, to believe in the Lord Jesus and to proclaim Him to the people in Poland and rest of Eastern Europe, this disaster would never have happened" (1978: 155). In his understanding, the Holocaust preceded the rebirth of the nation of Israel. "Yet there was fruit from the blood of the Jewish martyrs. There was the national and physical revival of Israel" (1978: 156). His interpretation is in line with the evangelical premillennialist understanding of the establishment of the State of Israel as the fulfillment of prophecy. He quotes prophecies that speak of Israel's return to its borders and concludes "perhaps God is now dealing with Israel . . . first by severity and sufferings and now by His goodness." As for his own survival, he believed that God spared him so that he could "tell the story of the Jewish Christians who perished" (1978: 116, 136). But although he may have been saved for a special mission, he is careful to make the point that the true believers are always safe. "First we have to believe in Him; then no matter what may happen to us, we will be safe in Him" (1978: 106).

Conclusion

[32] Written by professional writers, often on behalf of various evangelization operations, Holocaust survivor biographies represent the values and needs of conservative Christians. In these memoirs the Holocaust is not merely years of turmoil, suffering, and hiding, but embodies spiritual meaning and moral triumph. It was a period of moral and spiritual trial, a test that the true believers passed triumphantly, having maintained their moral integrity and adherence to Christian principles. True believers were protected and saved spiritually, if not physically, even in the harshest of circumstances. They might have undergone physical harassment, suffering, and even death, but such a death was martyrdom, and their eternal life had been guaranteed. As for those who accepted Jesus during the Holocaust, the unconverted were saved because they were predestined to accept their true Savior. Their survival is explained in light of their eventual conversion and their need to bear witness to the Christian and Jewish communities of the saving power of Christ.

[33] The evangelical Holocaust memoirs have a distinct educational evangelical mission. In part, they describe the horrors of the Holocaust to the evangelical community. But mostly, they portray the heroes of the books as exemplary Christians who set standards for others. The books promote primarily the acceptance of Jesus as a personal Savior as well as some other principles of evangelical Christianity. The history and behavior of evangelical Christians throughout the war years are presented as proof that the acceptance of Christianity guarantees physical and spiritual survival as well as decent and moral behavior. The biographies give the impression that

pietists and evangelical Christians, both as individuals and as a community, faced the years of terror with courage and dignity and survived the horrors morally and spiritually, if not always physically.

[34] The Holocaust converts' memoirs are also meant to promote the Christian postulate of forgiveness, reconciliation and unity. The victims must forgive their persecutors and accept them as fellow Christians; Jesus has already forgiven them and the true believers should not hold grudges against enemies of yesteryears. The destructiveness of the Holocaust should not work against the higher values of Christian love.

[35] The Holocaust, the suffering, misery and mass murder that characterized the reality of Jewish existence during World War II, did not derive, in the evangelical interpretation as reflected in the memoirs, from brutal anti-Semitism, instigated by various historical, sociological, psychological, and theological factors. It is rather, the outcome of a rebellion against God. It is a reflection of a society going astray by the short-lived triumph of non-Christians while true Christians carried forth with their values intact.

[36] Nazism as described in the biographies manifested an alienation from the knowledge of God, an alienation which many of the Jewish victims shared. The Holocaust in evangelical eyes is not merely an unfortunate chapter in Jewish and European history, nor a bloody chapter in the history of Christian-Jewish relationships. It is a chapter in the Jewish and non-Jewish encounter with Christ. The more Jews and non-Jews accept the values of evangelical Christianity, the less chance there will be of such brutalities repeating themselves. The answer to the horrors of the Holocaust is the evangelization of both Jews and Gentiles. The Holocaust should serve as a sign and proof to the Jews that they should accept their true Messiah and embrace Christianity. Their physical and spiritual destiny would then be completely secured. While the biographies (with the noted exception of Hirschmann's) convey awareness of and sensitivity toward Jewish suffering and look upon the Jews amicably and appreciatively as heirs to the Biblical covenant between Israel and God, the horrors they underwent during the Holocaust are seen as footsteps in their collective spiritual pilgrimage towards recognizing the true message of God.

[37] The memoirs share the evangelical understanding of the role of the Jews in God's plans for humanity. The State of Israel is referred to in the memoirs in a very favorable manner. The birth of this state is seen as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecies that speak about the return of the Jews to their land. The national rebirth serves as collective compensation to the Jews for their suffering and loss. It is proof that God has not abandoned the Jewish people, that He has not forgotten his ancient promises to that nation and that they are still his "Chosen People." When the Messiah comes, the Jews will accept him as their own and their national restoration will be completed. Until then, it is the duty of the evangelical community to preach the Christian message of salvation to the Jews. Both the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel are steps in the journey of the nation of Israel towards its reconciliation and union with Christ. According to the evangelical understanding they still have a long way to go.

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