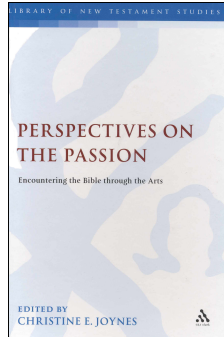


○ **REVIEW OF CHRISTINE E. JOYNES (ED.),
**PERSPECTIVES ON THE PASSION:
 ENCOUNTERING THE BIBLE THROUGH THE ARTS****
 (LONDON: T & T CLARK, 2007)

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This collection stems from an interdisciplinary conference at Oxford in 2005 hosted by the Centre for the Reception History of the Bible and is edited by the centre's associate director. While the essays offer a wide variety of perspectives from various arts and disciplines, they share a respect for the passion bordering on nostalgia. In fact, as the volume never defines the passion, it serves as the absent centrepiece of the collection.

The volume attempts to broaden interpreters' horizons, aspiring particularly to promote a holistic reading of the Bible. The opening essay by Ulrich Luz offers a theoretical foundation for this overall tone by discussing 'effective history' (cf. Gadamer). Luz prefers this term to 'reception history,' because the former emphasises (the biblical) texts' formative power, rather than the recipient's activity. Nancy Mackey's short afterword does reflect upon the necessary, imaginative work of any artist (the artist's aesthetic meditation) reprising the passion, but even she calls readers to affective meditation on the passion in the volume's last words: 'There is a need to revise all human values in the light of the crucifixion' (quoting from J. R. Watson's essay; cf. William Flynn's essay).

In the opening essay, Luz seeks to understand what 'we' and 'others' have become because of the passion. Speaking as a member of the Swiss Reformed Church, Luz concludes that the iconoclastic Reformation (and the move of passion art from worship settings into museums) has led to middle-class, intellectualised churches that fail to respond to the Bible holistically and sensually. Discussing passion art from the Rabbula Gospels to contemporary artists, Luz also tries to articulate a hermeneutic appropriate to art, rather than texts (e.g., attention to spatial rather than temporal dimension). Despite artistic and modern alienation, Luz hopes that passion art may still offer experiences of transcendence.

Peter Hawkins' analysis of literary interpretations of Gethsemane does cast light upon that gospel scene. For Hawkins, most commentaries ignore Jesus' vulnerability and human hesitation

(e.g., in the threefold prayer for deliverance). Given their standard dating, the gospels act similarly, moving from the anguish in Mark to Luke's worshipping Jesus, who offers a single prayer and quickly receives angelic support. By contrast, modern authors, like Saramago and Rilke, emphasise Jesus' human suffering. Searching for literature more in harmony with the creeds (and the gospels read harmoniously, which joins Mark and Matthew's cry of dereliction with Luke and John's triumphant final words), Hawkins finds the modern poet Denise Levertov's combination of humanity and divinity in '*Salvator mundi: Via Crucis*' most compelling: 'was Incarnation's heaviest weight,/but this sickened desire to renege.'

Timothy Gorringer uses art to challenge Andrew Ure's claim that the cross fits a workforce for obedience and thereby sanctifies social abuses. While admitting that many crucifixion paintings are insipidly romanticised, Gorringer finds exemplars like Goya's *The Third of May*, which features a central cruciform sufferer, more helpful politicisations of murder by occupying forces (like Jesus' crucifixion itself). Goya's allusion to the cross makes Jesus one with suffering humanity as he is more directly in Grünwald's famous *Isenheim Altarpiece*, whose crucified Christ looks remarkably like the hospital patients who would regularly view it. For Gorringer, then, the passion and (some of) its art refuses to make a virtue of suffering (cf. Chagall's *White Crucifixion*) and is best understood in terms of something like liberation theology.

Robin Jensen's survey of the cross/crucifixion in early Christian art helpfully hazards an explanation of the cross' late appearance there. She believes that the funerary setting of most early Christian art likely called for consoling art (not crucifixions) and traces early Christian reluctance to depict the cross to fears of pagan derision of the shameful cross and fears of subjecting the holy to possible idolatry. When those fears subsided, and when Helena discovered the True Cross and when pilgrimage and relics became important, the cross began to appear in art.

Both Emma Hornby and William Flynn discuss correspondences between exegesis and the music of the Mass. Hornby looks at the arrangement of two Good Friday chants, *Domine audiui* and *Qui habitat*. The first includes the phrase, 'in the middle of two living creatures, you will be known' (Hab. 3:2 LXX), which Hornby traces to exegetical discussions of Jesus' crucifixion between two thieves and of his incarnation in a stable between ass and ox (more commonly traced to Isa. 1:3). The second chant connects Jesus' wilderness temptation, Good Friday, Lent, and Ps. 90 (91) in order to reflect upon God's protection of the faithful Christ (and worshiper) from Satan's final temptation. Flynn traces the development of the music for the Feast of the Compassion of Mary (the Friday before Good Friday) through allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs and the practice of affective meditation. In the service, the performers take on several personae, including most importantly that of Mary, whose experience of the passion the worshipers seek to share. With Mary, the worshipers learn how to view the crucifixion.

J. R. Watson examines the affects of Reformation hymnody in a similar fashion, but focuses, naturally, on modern music's greater concern with individual transformation. The hymns call the worshiper to abandon worldly values and to accept the ironically (death brings life; God dies) and oxymoronically (pain/pleasure; grace/vengeance; wounds/dear) stated values of the cross. This ambivalence, along with the frequent repetition of 'amazing,' configures the cross as a sacred wonder. Sensing possible ethical problems here, Watson connects meditation on the cross to Abelard's moral influence theory, not to Anselm's satisfaction theory – that is, to love, not vengeance.

Jaime Lara ranges farther afield to discuss the missionaries' depiction of crucifixion for Aztecs who already practiced human sacrifice and cannibalism in order to prevent the inevitable end of the world. The result included corn paste crucifixes, prayers for our daily tortilla (the Nahuatl word for sacrifice also described the making of tortillas), churches built on the top of and replacing partially demolished temple pyramids, and the use of the Nahuatl word for an altar of human sacrifice to describe central atria cross podiums. Apparently, both natives and missionaries simply accepted bloody sacrifice as 'the inexorable business of life.'

Regina Schwartz also reflects on the Mass, but as a craving for justice. As the Reformed church moved away from the material presence of Christ in the Mass, the distinction between Christ as sacrifice (justice) or as murder victim (injustice) became more ambiguous. Schwartz finds the same difficulties in *Othello* as she depicts Shakespeare's play with the possibility of redemption in an aborted Mass administered by a demented priest (Othello's murder/sacrifice of Desdemona). For Schwartz, Shakespeare invoked imagery from the Mass to utilise its desires for justice. While Schwartz distinguishes church and theatre, the common craving for justice in both justifies thinking of Elizabethan theatre as the first Reformed church and the place where the individual becomes privately responsible for distinguishing sacrifice and murder.

Sara Maitland imagines the inner voice of her guardian angel in her fictional 'Bad Friday'; a piece which is also part of the modern, subjective, individualistic world. 'Bad Friday' is so named because the angels stand idly and uselessly by on that day as humans alone 'feel' Christ's suffering. The motif of the angels' jealousy on this point invites one to affective mediation on the passion and makes Maitland's fiction a fitting conclusion to the volume.

The volume is well organised and introduced, and each of the essays nicely describes a moment in the passion's ecclesial and artistic reception. The essays on music for the Mass, for example, and the volume's emphasis on affective meditation provide helpful cultural background for understanding something like Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (a film to which some of the essayists refer). Except for Hawkins, however, the essayists seldom reflect in detail on the gospel passion narratives or even on their chosen moment in the passion's reception as a reading of the gospel passions. Most of the essayists are more interested in liturgical or theological developments (reforms). The essayists imply concerns about the passion's potentially negative consequences on surprisingly few occasions and, then, only in order to dismiss them. Only Gorringer deals with such concerns substantively; therefore, the interpretation that Gorringer refutes is the clearest note of discord in the volume's chorus of affective meditation. Schwartz's reflections on the ambivalences between murder and sacrifice and church and theater are much more subtle, but actually more dangerous notes for the chorus, because they (like Luz's reflections on the differences between visual art and text and other essayists' reflections on the differences between modernity and pre-modern traditions) ultimately speak to the difficulties and ambiguities of interpretation that the call to affective meditation may obscure.