

Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem, The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (London: Allen Lane, 2007); 656 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0713994476. RRP £25.

This is a splendid book. It aims to treat two peoples as well as cities in the ancient world by comparing them in terms of each other's world views and values. This approach is rare, and therefore all the more significant, given that the collision (in every sense of the word) of these two cultures has so shaped the subsequent civilisation of Europe and, arguably, elsewhere.

Goodman's approach is systematic. He compares and contrasts Romans and Jews in their definitions of themselves and each other, their communities, views of the world, ways of life, systems of government, political structures and outlooks. Thus this book is certainly not merely, essentially, about Jews. Treating Rome and Romans (including non-Romans or Italians who came to subscribe to Roman culture and civilization) in terms of Jewish criteria reveals some fruitful results. Like a Quentin Tarantino film, the book begins, in a sense, in the middle: the destruction of Jerusalem during the suppression of the first Jewish revolt. This Goodman sees as a pivotal moment not only in Jewish, but also in Roman (imperial), history.

Goodman's insights concerning the reasons for that destruction are also in many ways innovative. While other revolts, such as the Boudiccan revolt in early Roman Britain, had been suppressed systematically by a multi-legionary force, on the basis, largely, of purely military considerations, the decision to 'shock and awe' the rebels of Judaea derived in no small part from political considerations at the highest level. The revolt of 66 occurred just prior to a crisis in domestic politics: the conspiracy against and assassination of Nero, and the subsequent civil war. It fell into a temporary power vacuum, while Rome's ultimate reaction involved the most promising and eventually successful contenders for *imperium*, Vespasian and his son Titus. Like Josephus, Goodman finds Gessius Florus' failure to suppress what was, initially, a very minor disturbance significant. But surely the Boudiccan revolt, which began with a similar Roman violation of British sacred space, is a parallel?

Perhaps not quite. The delay following the revolt of 66 was unprecedented. It gave the rebels of Jerusalem the opportunity to set up an independent government over the whole of Judaea, unparalleled, as far as rebel governments were concerned, in intricacy and nationalistic outlook. Goodman stresses the fact that the coins struck by the Judaeans refer to 'Israel', not 'Judaea', indicating more than merely a non-national 'peasants' revolt', as some recent commentators have argued.

Of course, no history, or writing of history, can be de-contextualized from the circumstances of its composition. Goodman does not hide this fact. The very title of his book, and its subtitle, refer, more or less explicitly, to other, modern works. *Rom und Jerusalem, die letzte Nationalitätsfrage* (1862) is a proto-Zionist work, written by Moses Hess, a former socialist colleague of Karl Marx, who, disillusioned by the mirage (as he thought) of assimilation of Jews in Europe, and their contemporary persecution in Damascus, followed Yehuda Alkalai in proposing a Jewish national restoration in the land of Israel. 'The Ancient Clash of Civilizations' refers, of course, to Samuel P. Huntington's work, whose most (in)famous conclusion is that 'Islam has bloody borders'.

Infamous or not, it is this vision which Goodman, advertently or inadvertently, evokes: The Jews as the Muslims of Antiquity. However, Goodman's intention is not to create or re-affirm a stereotype, but to overcome one. His Romans and Jews are very different from each other, but they also share a common background. That their encounter ended in tragedy had very concrete, historical, not metaphysical, causes. Roman and Hellenistic Jewry, in Judaea and the diaspora, could take many and various forms, but most held the land of

Israel, Jerusalem and its temple in some kind of reverence. Both Jews and (traditional) Romans had (publicly, at least) strong familial values (and a detestation of 'Greek' sexual practices), as well as a reverence for state religion and customs. The Roman decision to leave the Jewish temple in ruins, was quite unprecedented in imperial customs, when subject peoples' were usually permitted to rebuild their sacred places. It stemmed, according to Goodman, from a need for the new Flavian dynasty to both win the Judaeen war, with, as it were, extreme prejudice, and to magnify its significance to a home audience. Goodman observes that much of the Rome with which we are familiar today was built from the spoils of the sack of Jerusalem in 70AD to commemorate the triumph of Vespasian and his son Titus. Besides the more obvious sights like the Colosseum and the arch of Titus there was also, for instance, the re-built temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, financed from the yearly haf-shekel tax on all adult Jewish males. This was formerly collected for use by the Jerusalem priesthood. Now it was levied as a collective punishment by the empire. This, perhaps, more than any other discrimination, executed into Christian times, both defined the Jews of Judea and of the diaspora as one nation, collectively guilty of insurrection against the Roman state and its gods, whether pagan, or, subsequently, Christian. Jews of North Africa, Asia or Europe did not immediately rise in revolt with the Jews of Judea, though they doubtless watched events unfold with dismay. By and large they were either content to remain at peace with their gentile neighbours, or the prospect of suppression was too terrifying for them. Jews had already been twice expelled from Rome. But Goodman also associates the collection of the temple tax post-destruction with the explosion of discontent with civil inequality in Alexandria under the reign of Trajan. The subsequent revolt and suppression can only have enforced Jewish and Roman views of each other and of themselves.

In the Christian period, Goodman traces the continuity of imperial policy towards Jews. While some may have hoped Constantine's edict of toleration to have promised hope of restoration of the temple cult, the internal dynamics of Christian self-definition of Jews would have soon disillusioned them. Most Jews would have only become slowly aware of these dynamics: that Jesus had prophesied the temple's destruction, and the scattering of the people. Justin Martyr would write to Antoninus Pius confirming him in his (quasi-) Christian duty to keep Jerusalem and Judea destitute of Jews. However, Goodman, whilst to be commended for his investigation of the complicated relationship between Jewry and emerging Christian culture, is perhaps less rigorous in his treatment of the evolution of the Church while still within Judaism and Jewry. While he makes a convincing case that, for the most part, the Nazarenes were tolerated within Jewish society, he does not explain such documents as the liturgical curse of the heretics ('minim') that the Cairo Geniza fragment shows to have referred (at least in some circles) to the Jewish Christians. This is surely an important moment in Jewish history, as previously, as Goodman rightly observes, there had been no such thing as Jewish heresy (though Ezra's proscription of Jews married to gentiles, and the Hasmonean war with Hellenizing Jews could serve as precedents). Goodman traces such a 'parting of the ways' to after the destruction, when identification with Jews as a national body entailed a penalty which both Jewish and gentile Christians would have been increasingly reluctant to incur. This is an important point, since in histories of early gentile Christianity, it is usually stressed that it was Christianity that entailed penalties while Judaism was tolerated. In fact, for the most part, Christianity and Christians were tolerated, while persecution was the exception.

Moreover, during the Christian period already existing pagan tendencies to define Jews as a homogenous, national group were only enforced. Jews were not only de facto rebels against the Roman state, they had rejected God (the Father) and his Son themselves, both

entrammelling themselves in subsequent dispossession and justifying it ante and post factum. Goodman rightly recounts the fact of Jewish large-scale presence in Galilee, consisting in no small part of refugees and their descendants. But the brief flourishing of synagogue building can be dated to an interregnum of pagan resurgence against Christianity, to be ended by imperial claiming, or (re-)claiming of Judaea-cum-Palestine. The frescoes and mosaics depicting temple structures and artefacts testify to a Jewish longing for their restoration that persisted for centuries. Accounts of Jewish (and Samaritan) disturbances in the land of Israel, even in the Christian period, testify to a discontent with worldly circumstances. The pressure that exerted on Jewish society is evinced by the fact of Jewish conversion to Christianity, to which Constantine's prescription of the death penalty for inhibiting again witnesses.

But none of these things, writes Goodman, was inevitable. It was pure misfortune that Judeans decided to revolt when they did and it rested purely with the choice of individual emperors that the Jewish temple, alone of all national sacred sites, was not restored. This means that modern history, too, the present and the future, are not set in stone. Goodman deliberately refers to the proto-Zionist work of Moses Hess and states that the hope of a Jewish restoration was born not only from a sense of collective loss, but also from a sense that this loss was not irreversible. Perhaps significantly the Jewish Nationalism of Moses Hess was influenced by Italian Nationalism, at a time when the political entity which represented the last remnants of the Roman Empire, the Ecclesiastical State, was eclipsed by the modern state of Italy. What Moses Hess envisaged was a modern Jewish state not unlike Italy, or any other of the modern nation states that emerged during that period. Its hopes and ambitions, but also its problems, would be quite similar to those of other states. This is a far cry from interpreting present day conflicts in terms of a 'clash of civilisations'. But just as Goodman cannot find the cause for the ancient Jewish revolt in especially bad Roman rule or treatment, the existence, say, of Islamist militancy today cannot be simply explained by Zionism or colonial misrule. Perhaps a moral to be drawn from Goodman's study is that today's conflicts arise from misunderstanding, error, and circumstance just as much as that ancient conflict did.

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